Myths of Composite Culture and Equality of Religions

Harsh Narain

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Equally at home in Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, Arabic, English, Hindi and Urdu, he had written dozens of books and tracts, and hundreds of papers and articles. He had contributed notable articles to the Hindi Sāhitya Kosha, the Urdu Encyclopaedia and the Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies. His academic interests ranged over Vedic and Epic Studies, Indian history and culture, Islam and Sūfism, Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu poetry, and Marxism. He had studied the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth-s in Arabic.

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CHAPTER I

THE MYTH OF COMPOSITE INDIAN CULTURE

During the early phases of modern Indian renaissance, it was the Vedic-Upaniṣadic phase of Indian culture which was accorded the pride of place in describing and evaluating Indian culture. Later, it came to be rivalled by what the atheists and the materialists, the agnostics and the rationalists, and the humanists and the modernists combined to call anti-Vedic-Upaniṣadic culture fathered by Cārvāka and the Buddha. Lastly, during the struggle for India's independence through non-cooperation and civil disobedience against the British, coupled with pandering to the so-called minorities' freaks of fancy culminating first in the Khilāfat movement and then in the vivisection of this country, a veritable communalization of Indian politics set in, camouflaged as 'secularism', leading to an exaggerated fancy on the secularists' part for India's Muslim past and thereby for the so-called composite, Hindu-Muslim culture.

The stated or unstated postulates of 'secular' reasoning in the present context are:

1. That Indian culture is a composite culture.
2. That the composite culture is pre-eminently the culture supervenient upon the mingling of the Hindu and Muslim cultural streams.
3. That the Hindus should be thankful to the Muslims for the latter's contribution to the composite culture.
4. That it is this phase of Indian culture which is of paramount importance as conducive to communal harmony and

national integration.

5. That such a composition of cultures is always desirable.

The protagonists of this concept of composite Indian culture feel committed to paint the Hindu-Muslim relations during the pre-British times in the brightest possible colours. To them, all was well before the inception of the British rule in this country. Indeed, they sometimes wax so enthusiastic in flaunting their whim of perennially persisting 'ideal' Hindu-Muslim relations and pay such glowing tributes not only to the Indian Muslim community but even to the most universally despised persecutors of the Hindus and destroyers of all that is Hindu that the unwary are led to forget that India was ever partitioned on account of just the non-coexistential disposition of the Muslim mind.

Through an eulogy of this phase of Indian culture as a model for our times, a mentality is sought to be created which threatens to drive Indian culture into self-alienation, if not self-oblivion or outright self-cancellation. Thanks to overt or covert politicization of the class of even our intellectuals, everybody is toeing the line of the political demagogues. India has strayed in its self-complacent quest for its cultural identity.

On the other side, cultural purists tend to dismiss the idea of composite culture out of hand and assert that it is civilization rather than culture which can afford to be composite. Is it so as a matter of fact or as a matter of logic? They seem to be inclined to the second alternative.

The situation is not that simple. For one thing, as it were, the protagonists of the concept of composite culture seem to take culture and civilization together without worrying about the nice distinction between these. For another, although there does exist a line of demarcation between culture and civilization, does it rule out the possibility of interaction and intermixture between the two? Social life cannot be divided into watertight compartments. Culture is not civilization-proof, nor is civilization culture-proof.

It is true that they have their own dynamics each, yet they each can receive stimulus even from outside. Just see, where is the purity of our culture today? It has come to be gripped by a tremendous process of Westernization/modernization. Has Bertrand Russell not predicted (gloomily) that time will come when 'the only difference between East and West will be that the former is more Western'?[1] Likewise, the onslaught of Islam on Indian culture has undeniably had some impact or other, which deserves to be studied responsibly. Tara Chand's findings need suitable refurbishing and rehashing.

Even so, there is a genuine apprehension that some of the abiding fundamentals and ideals of perennial Indian culture run the risk of getting distorted or clouded at the hands of the advocates of composite Indian culture or of undiscerning admirers of Indian Islam and Muslim rule. The tendency is already on the ascendant of playing down the achievements of pre-Islamic and pre-Buddhistic Indian culture and of creating the impression that all that is significant and sound in Indian culture is creditable to either Buddhism or to the Muslim rulers.

It would be pertinent to point out, before we proceed further, that culture has two strata : culture of the aristos and culture of the demos. It is the former which represents and defines society, imparts its own identity to it, and determines the course of events in it. There is little notable difference among the different cultures of the demos. The culture of the demos has no appreciable form of its own, wherefore it is comparatively easy for it to intermingle with other such cultures. In what follows, therefore, we always mean aristocratic culture by 'culture'.

Now, what do the protagonists of the composite view of Indian culture mean by 'composite culture'? Three meanings of the term suggest themselves: cultural congeries, eclectic culture, and synthetic culture. Sorokin defines cultural congeries as

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1. Allen Wood, *Bertrand Russell: A Passionate Sceptic*, London, 1957, p. 136.

follows: 'Any collection of cultural phenomena interrelated only by spatial adjacency (or time-adjacency, like many newsreel events) makes the most conspicuous case of cultural congeries.'[2] Do the sponsors of the composite view of Indian culture mean to say that there is no internal, essential relation between the various constituents of Indian culture but only a spatial and/or temporal one and that, occupying as they do one and the same space, they are mutually separate and independent? An allied question is : Is there peaceful coexistence amongst the cultures constituting this congeries or are they constantly at war with one another? That ours is a pluralistic society goes without saying.

Now, if Indian culture is not just a congeries of cultures, is it of the nature of an eclectic culture? Eclecticism implies random intermixture, irrespective of and indifferent to the native or nascent urge for unity, self-identity, and genius of the respective cultures concerned, often as a house divided against itself. A congeries just happens to be, whereas eclecticism is rather an invited phenomenon. Thanks to the loss of vitality of culture, for example, its bearers tend to become mimics of the good, bad, or indifferent traits of other cultures, which results in a hotchpotch of cultural patterns, tending often to do more harm than good. Yāmunācārya, the great pre-Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇava philosopher, warns against intermixture or eclecticism (*saṅkara*) of different Tantric traditions thus: 'The Śaiva, the Pāśupata, the Saumya, and the fourfold Lāguḍa Tantra-s [have their own identities and] are meant to be different. They must not be intermixed.'[3] Then do the upholders of the composite Indian culture theory purport to say that Indian culture is an eclectic culture, a mere intermixture of cultures, without a cardinal culture for the constituent cultures to hinge on?

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2. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis*, London, 1952, p. 192.

3. Yāmuna, *Āgamaprāmāṇya* 109.

The third and last alternative meaning of composite culture is a synthetic / synthesized / integrated culture, a culture born of a happy blending of different cultures. If the upholders of the composite view of Indian culture mean such a culture by composite culture, they are living in a fool's paradise. The partition of India and the Muslim problem miscalled communal problem are a standing challenge to it.

Theoretically speaking, there is no logical bar to the concept of composite culture. But, being in the nature of a more subtle, evasive, and elusive reality than civilization, and virtually a second nature with its bearers, it is far from as easily compoundable with other socio-cultural phenomena as the media of its expression constituting civilization. As regards the particular case of India, we have reasons to believe that, while Indian society and civilization are definitely composite, Indian culture cannot be called so, notwithstanding the patent fact that the latter betrays sure signs of other cultures' influence upon it. But being influenced is one thing; being composite, quite another. For that matter, Western culture is exercising a greater influence on it than Muslim culture ever did, and yet Indian culture cannot be said to be a composite culture on that account. And there is the phenomenon of something like a religio-cultural counterattack on the West from the East, especially from India. In fact, mutual give and take among various cultures has been taking place from time immemorial, but cultures combining to form a composite culture is a rare phenomenon in history.

As a matter of fact, perennial Indian national culture is a broad unity, is one omnibus culture, dating from the pre-Vedic or rather pre-historic times and coming down to us after suffering a long series of vicissitudes constantly changing its colours and contours, often sloughing off its dead weight and absorbing new elements, and yet retaining its identity for the whole world to see. The following Urdū couplet of Aḥmad Nadīm Qāsimī appears to fit it well:

Jab bhī dekhā hai tujhe ṣūrat-i nau dekhā hai
Marḥalah ṭayy na huā terī shināsā'ī kā

(Whenever I saw thee I saw thee in a new form. The problem of thy identity remains unsolved.)

The Buddhist, the Jaina, the Sikh, and such other 'cultures' of Indian origin as are considered non-Hindu, semi-Hindu, or marginally Hindu 'cultures' are in the nature of subcultures of and firmly rooted in this great national culture. Similar, at best, is the case with the 'secular culture' of today. And the purely atheistic-materialistic tradition of the Cārvāka variety, thriving on negation of religion pure and simple, has had no culture of its own, nor anything in the nature of a subculture of the great culture. So far as the cultures of non-Indian, Semitic origins are concerned, their role here has all along been that of a counter-culture or inculture by and large, with the reservation, however, that, despite all that can be preferred against the Christian missions in India, it must be acknowledged in all fairness that their activities have led to a sort of unprecedented acculturation of the down-trodden, the neglected, 'the dust and the dross and the scum of the earth', so to speak. Intended primarily, though, to subserve the counter-culture, the process of acculturation is standing the national culture also in good stead. Be whatever it may, it is Hindu culture which is the presiding (*abhimānin*) culture of this country, the aforesaid other 'cultures' being either adventitious (*anuśayin*) or adjunctive/accretional in nature.

All this will receive embellishment as we proceed.

Well, it bears repeating that our quarrel is not so much with the protagonists of composite culture as such, nor even with the protagonists of composite Indian culture in general, but with the protagonists of composite Hindu-Muslim culture, who are out to exhibit Islam as a progressive cultural force and a boon to India. They seem to take it for granted, and approvingly, that their brand of composite culture has helped antiquate the pre-Muslim phase of Indian culture, rendering it fit only to sink into oblivion. This is

why the Muslims and the so-called secularists seldom talk of the great pre-Muslim culture of Greater India except, as in the case of quite a number of the secularists, to malign it implicitly and sometimes explicitly.

This is reflected, for example, in their choice of representatives of composite culture. For instance, Rasheeduddin Khan's list of 'the most illustrious representatives of the composite culture of India spanning eight centuries' consists of (1) Amīr Khusrau, (2) Kabīr, (3) Nānak, (4) Dārā Shukoh, (5) Rammohun Roy, and (6) Jawaharlal Nehru.[4] And Gandhi? Omission of his name is significant and, to all intents and purposes, provides a clue to the mental reservation on the part of the author. Again, according to him, the composite culture of India includes the following seven streams of influence: (1) Vedāntic vision, (2) Bhakti mārga, (3) humanistic concepts of Islam, (4) the message of *ṣulḥ-i kull* (peace for all and complete peace) of Sūfism, (5) syncretic Indo-Muslim cultural values, (6) cosmopolitanism of modern urban development, and (7) heritage of Indian national movement.[5] Elsewhere, he adds 'the essence of the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*' as the second item, thereby revising the list to include eight items.[6] The emphasis of this list, too, on the role of Islam is clear enough.

As against the claims of the upholders of the theory of composite, Hindu-Muslim culture, it is extremely significant that no Indian philosopher has ever shown any awarness of Muslim

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4. Rasheeduddin Khan, 'The Problematique: The Heritage of Composite Culture As an Input in the Process of Building a New National Identity', *Composite Culture of India and National Integration*, Rasheeduddin Khan, ed., a product of a seminar in the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, held in 1984 on the subject, Simla, 1987, p. 55.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.

6. Rasheeduddin Khan, 'The Root and Origins of Composite Culture of India', *Composite Culture and Indian Society: Problems and Prospects of Integration*, Proceedings of Dr. Zakir Husain Educational and Cultural Foundation, Radhey Mohan ed., New Delhi, n.d., pp. 5-6.

religion or philosophy right from the dawn of Islam till the inception of British rule in India. Indeed, even thereafter, no Indian philosopher appears to have taken more than passing notice of Muslim thought or culture in shaping his own thought. Barring the honourable exceptions of Dārā Shukoh, Akbar, and possibly Zayn al-'Ābidīn[7] and Fayḍī[8], no Muslim theologian, thinker, or even Sūfī has ever thought it fit to have a peep into Indian religion or philosophy while formulating his views.

Even during the British rule, it was taken for granted that the expressions 'Indian philosophy', 'Indian religion', and 'Indian culture' stood for the philosophy, religion, and culture of India. Muslim philosophy and religion, too, came to flourish on Indian soil, which gave birth to such leading lights in the field as Shaykh Aḥmad Sarhindī nicknamed Mujaddid Alf-i Thānī (1564-1634), Shāh Walī Allāh, Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd, Fazl-i Ḥaqq Khairābādī, Qāsim Nānautawi, and Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl. But none of these find place in the histories of Indian philosophy and religion, with the solitary exception of Iqbāl, who is sometimes taken notice of in the syllabus of certain universities. Everybody was convinced that, even though the Muslims had permanently settled in India, their religion, philosophy, and culture — in fact their entire way of life and thought — were alien; that their rule was a foreign rule; and that their centre of gravity belongs elsewhere than this country. That is to say, Muslim culture was taken to be having not an essential or organic but only a spatio-temporal relation with Indian culture.

It was Lālā Lājpat Rāi who was the first to moot the idea that 'the Hindus and Muslims have coalesced into an Indian people, very much the same way as the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and

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7. Sulṭān Zayn al-'Ābidīn of Kashmir wrote a work, *Shikāyat*, based on *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, no longer extant.

8. Fayḍī authored a book entitled *Shāriq al-Ma'rifat*, 2nd ed., Lucknow, 1885, setting out certain Vedāntic theses of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* and the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. It is difficult to say how far he himself upheld them.

Normans formed the English people of to-day'[9] and that 'the Muslim rule in India was not a foreign rule'.[10] The 'non-communal', 'secular' historians began to follow suit. Their contention is that, despite Islam's being a religion of foreign origin and the Muslims' establishing their rule here as foreign invaders, they settled here for all time to come and became Indians, forgetting all about their native lands. They ruled India from within India, unlike the British who exercised their sway over India from afar.

This logic has little force. Mere permanent settlement in a country does not entitle a plunderer to be looked upon as indigenous. It must first be seen whose interests he is out to serve. What is his attitude towards Indians? Take an example. European settlers entered America and ruined the original inhabitants, whom they named 'Red Indians' (under a misconception), completely. To expect the remaining Red Indians to regard their European-born rulers as equally indigenous would be a cruel joke beyond their understanding. It is indeed not for nothing that while white Americans celebrate as the Thanks-giving Day the date on which the Pilgrim Fathers stepped on American soil, the native Red Indians observe it as the Day of Mourning. This poor lot has been reduced to the status of a stranger in its own homeland, like the poet who laments:

Ghurbat-zadah-ī nīst chu man dar waṭan-ī man

(There is none so much of a stranger in his own homeland as I am in mine). It is a different matter that the Red Indians are on the brink of extinction thanks to exploitation and tyranny of the Euro-Americans and that there is nobody to challenge the latter.

This holds good in the case of India with a vengeance. It needs no emphasis that the bulk of the Muslim rulers in our land were

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9. *Young India*, pp. 73-75, referred to in R.C. Majumdar, *Historiography in Modern India* (Bombay, 1970), p. 49.

10. *Loc. cit.*

preoccupied with uprooting Hindu religion and culture within their limitations, which were severe enough, however. They left no stone unturned in de-Hinduizing or denationalizing the Hindus, in effect de-Indianizing the Indians, in various ways. It is preposterous to question their credentials as true Muslims. Their '*Ulamā*' exhorted them off and on to make the best of their sword to root out the Hindus and convert India into a full-fledged *Dār al-Islām*. Sayyid Nūr ad-Dīn Mubārak Ghaznawī Suhrawardī, at once a leading Sūfī, a leading Muslim divine, and the Shaykh al-Islām of Sulṭān Iltutmish, led a deputation of '*Ulamā*' to the Sulṭān and advised him to give an ultimatum to the Hindus to embrace Islam or face death. The Sulṭān's prime minister pleaded powerlessness on his behalf to do so.[11] Then the Shaykh offered an alternative suggestion: '... the king should at least strive to disgrace, dishonour, and defame the Mushrik and idol-worshipping Hindus.... The sign of the kings being protectors of the faith is this: When they see a Hindu, their faces turn red and they wish to swallow him alive....'[12] A similar suggestion was made to Jalāl ad-Dīn Khaljī, who returned ruefully: 'Don't you see that Hindus, who are the worst enemies of God and of Islam, pass daily below my royal palace to the Jamunā beating drums and playing flutes, and practise before our eyes the worship of the idols with all the rituals? Fie on us unworthy leaders who declare

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11. At the instance of the king, Minister Niẓāmad-Dīn Junaydī said to the 'Ulamā':

'Fa-ammā dar īn waqt ki Hindustān naw-gīr ast wa Hindu chandān ast ki Musalmān dar-miyān-i īshān ba-ṭarīq-i namak andak dar-āyad, bisiyār bar nayāyad, ki agar mā ḥukm-i madhkūr ba-īshān kār khāham farmūd, na bāyad ki yak-dīgar shawand, shī'ah-i 'ālam shawad, wa mā az andakī-i ṭāqat na-yāram wa az har ṭaraf fitnath zāyad. Fa-ammā chūn chand sāl ba-guzarad wa dāru 'l-mulk wa khiṭaṭ wa qaṣabāt Musalmānān (bar-āyand) wa lashkar-hā bisiyār gird āyad, mā albattah ba Hunūd "Amma 'l-qatlu amma 'l-Islām" pesh āmadanī am.'

Ḍiyā' ad-Dīn Baranī, *Sahīfah-i Na't-i Muḥammadī* (Riza Library, Rampur, MSS), pp. 391-392.

12. *Loc. cit.*

ourselves Muslim kings! ... Had I been a Muslim ruler, a real king, or a prince and felt myself strong and powerful enough to protect Islam, any enemy of God and the faith of the Prophet of Islam would not have been allowed to chew betels in a care-free manner and put on a clean garment or live in peace.'[13] Qāḍī Mughīs ad-Dīn's advice to Sulṭān 'Alā' d-Dīn Khaijī was on similer lines, and the Sulṭān confessed that he had humiliated and pauperized the Hindus to his utmost even though without caring to know the provisions of the *Sharī'ah* on the subject.[14]

It is no wonder: the Muslim conquerors and rulers have all along been doing it everywhere. Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, etc. — wherever they turned, they brought all-round disaster. They massacred the unbelievers; enslaved them *en masse*; wreaked all sorts of indignities upon them; converted them forcibly; destroyed their language and literature, art and culture, and all that it implies — in short, all the marks of their identity.

Why did the native languages of the countries in general under Muslim rule not survive or flourish? 'Because', contends Shiblī Nu'mānī (1857-1914), 'the other nations felt ashamed to compose poetry in their own language in the presence of the poetry of Arabia (*Is lie ki 'Arab kī shā'irī ke āge dūsarī qaumoṅ ko apnī zabān meṅ shā'irī karne meṅ sharm ātī thī*).'[15] And this, after acknowledging in clear words, as if to contradict himself later: 'Look at Arabia itself. The country whose doors and walls hummed with poetry sank into an all-encompassing calm all of a sudden immediately after the advent of Islam (*Khud 'Arab ko dekho. Wah jis kī dar-o dīwar se shā'irī kī āwāz ātī thī Islām ke āte hī chāroṅ ṭaraf sannāṭā chhā gayā*).'[16] In fact, only Turkish could manage somehow to survive under the Muslim yoke. After the

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13. Ḍiyā' ad-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrozshāhī*, p. 217

14. *Ibid.*, p. 291; cp. p. 297.

15. Shiblī Nu'mānī, *Shi'ru 'l-'Ajam*, Vol. I, 5th impression, Azamgarh, 1962, p. 17.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 16

conquest of Iran by the Arabs, Persian went into a coma of two centuries' duration and could regain animation after considerable Arabicization. Reason? 'Abd Allāh bin Ṭāhir's order was to destroy all the books of Iran, owing to which Persian poetry ceased to be composed till the time of the Sassanids, as reported by Dawlat Shāh. According to the *Majma'al-Fuṣaḥā* (1284), the Arabs burnt down all of Persian literature but its infinitesimal part which the Iranians could conceal.[17]

Spain happens to be the only country which, having suffered the thrall of Islam for some seven centuries succeeded in overthrowing it, re-asserting its Christian identity, and bidding good-bye to Muslim culture, thereby plugging up the avenues to misconstruction of the imperialist usurpers' rule as indigenous rule. It is India alone where those out to uproot the whole gamut of the mainstream of our religio-cultural tradition are hailed as national heroes.

Before the advent of Islam, India was inhabited by a whole humanity comprising multifarious religio-cultural traditions and was buzzing with inter-traditional dialogues and debates under the umbrella of a common cultural milieu conducive to socio-cultural and religio-philosophical equilibrium of a unique kind. Indeed, even the Parsis and a section of the Jews persecuted in their homelands got asylum here to live like human beings as part and parcel of the Dharma-inspired, broad-based Indian humanity. Why, even pre-Muslim as well as Muslim Arab traders were welcomed in the South and received handsome grants as well as encouragement from the Hindu rulers for building mosques and converting people respectively. Indeed, driven out by Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf in early eighth century, a section of even Muslims sought asylum in India and were settled in Konkan and the Cape Camorin area.

Thus, even Muslim traders and refugees received whole-

17. *Ibid.*, p. 15

hearted welcome here and it is only the Muslim marauders who were dreaded and detested by the peace-loving people. Alberūnī observes that 'the repugnance of the Hindus against foreigners increased more and more when the Muslims began to make their inroads into their country; ..Maḥmūd (Ghaznawī) utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions, and like a tale of old in the mouth of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims.'[18] Alberūnī, adds: 'This is the reason, too, why Hindu sciences have retired far away from those parts of the country conquered by us, and have fled to places which our hands cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares, and other places. And there the antagonism between them and all foreigners receives more and more nourishment both from political and religious sources.'[19] Let these statements open the eyes of those who are never tired of condemning the Hindus for their proverbial exclusiveness *vis-a-vis* the Muslims.

Contradistinctively from this, the Hindus' sense of gratitude knows no bounds to Muslim rulers like Zayn al-'Ābidīn (1420-70) of Kashmir, 'Alāu'd-Dīn Husayn Shāh (1493-1519) of Bengal, and Akbar the Great Mughal, who behaved towards Indians as Indians and at whose hands they could heave a sigh of relief from religious persecution. The three rulers tried their utmost to Indianize their rule and restore the dignity of Hindu community and culture, the latter essaying the uphill task of integrating Islam therewith, followed in this behalf by Prince Dārā Shukoh. Who that has even the faintest sense of history can dispute the point that they were all intensely Indian, putting many a Hindu to shame in their patriotic fervour. The post-Kalhaṇa Kashmir historian

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18. *Alberuni's India*, Edward C. Sachau, ed. & tr., Ist Indian ed., Delhi etc., 1964, pp. 21-22.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Jonarāja declares Zayn al-'Ābidīn an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa:

Adbhutānāṁ padārthānāṁ tad-rājye saṅgraho 'bhavat.
Nārāyaṇāvatāro 'yaṁ, jñāyeta katham anyathā?[20]

Likewise, in Akbar the Brāhmaṇa-s saw the reincarnation of a Yogin named Mukunda Brahmacārin.[21] 'Alā'u'd-Dīn Husayn Shāh was a born Arab, yet his love for the Hindus earned him the honour of being regarded as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa.

The Kuṣāṇa emperor Kaniṣka, who belonged to a nomadic Turkish tribe called Yueh-ci and who ruled from Puruṣapur (Peshawar) over vast territories of Northern India, Afghanistan, and Turkistan, cast many coins carrying the engravings of the gods of Greece, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism and did a lot to promote Indian religions and traditions. He convoked the fourth Buddhist council to settle the text of the holy scriptures. This Turk came to enjoy fame in Buddhist literature next only to Aśoka.

As it is, almost all foreign hordes invading or entering India before the advent of Islam, such as the Greeks, the Parthians, the Śakas, the Hūṇas, the Gurjaras, the Pratihāras, the Kuṣāṇas, the Scythians, etc., were assimilated to the cultural mainstream by Hindu *inclusivism*. On top of it, the process of assimilation had been surprisingly non-violent and peaceful all through. This process consisted usually in assignment of the aliens to different castes or in creation of new castes for them under the umbrella of the relevant *Varṇa*-s. This is the secret of the multiplicity of the much-maligned castes. A full-scale research needs to be undertaken into this phenomenon as well as into how the all-assimilating Hinduism contracted the disease of exclusivism and touch-me-not-ism. Alberūnī's explanation referred to above will prove a beacon light in this area. To be sure, Islam was out to deal a death blow to the equilibrium, exuberance, and cosmopolitan

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20. Jonarāja, (*Dvitīyā*) *Rājataraṅgiṇī* 973.

21. *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa*, Pratisarga-Parva-Khaṇḍa 4, Adhyāya 20, Śloka-s 9 ff.

character of Indian humanity, later designated as Hindu culture in juxtaposition to Indian culture.

We do not purport to deny that there occurred sporadic acts of violence between certain sects in pre-Muslim India. We have not minced matters in this behalf in our relevant writings, nor do we intend to do so here. But it is equally undeniable that such acts were exceptional, and exceptions serve only to prove the rule.

Well, the Muslim rulers left no stone unturned in doing to the Hindus what they did to the other races and cultures. Nevertheless, they could not wipe the former out:

Phir bhī magar hai bāqī nām-o nishāṅ hamārā

(Still our name and fame persist). Why? 'The wonder is not,' says Sri Ram Sharma, 'that so many were converted but that the vast majority of Hindus kept their faith amidst so many temptations and such persecutions.'[22]

Reasons are many, which it is difficult to go into in this work. Even so, certain indications can be given. The first thing to note in this regard is the patent fact that, as compared with the other countries totally Islamized by the Muslim conquerors, India happens to have been, and still remains, too vast a country with a vaster population to be exposed to easy Islamization. Elimination, conversion, or transformation of a subcontinent like this is not child's play. Even so, Islam has registered a signal success to its credit in carving three independent Muslim states — Afghanistan,[23] Pakistan, and Bangla Desh — out of India's mainland; in Islamizing in toto the Indonesian archipelago, Seistan, Transoxiana, Sinkiang, and Maldives and several other islands colonized by the Hindus and forming part of what is known as Greater India; and Islamizing our country to such an extent that the

22. Sri Ram Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, Bombay, 1962, p. 169.

23. Afghanistan was a Hindu-Buddhist state before Muslim invasion thereon, comprising Gandhāra and Kamboja.

Muslim population of even this truncated India is greater than that of any Muslim country other than possibly Indonesia. To gauge the extent to which our name-and-mark (*nām-o nishāṅ*) still survives, we have also to take account of the facts that the ratio of Hindu and Muslim population in undivided India in 1800 A.D. was 7:1; in 1850 A.D., 6:1;[24] and now, less than 3:1. Is our name-and-mark not hastening to extinction that way?

Besides, incidentally, the scheduled castes and tribes as well as other backward castes and classes are already on the way to secession from Hinduism *en masse*. The former are also undergoing conversion and all that it implies — anti-Hinduization, denationalization, and de-Indianization —, steadily and on a mass scale. Besides, the caste Hindus, too, are undergoing a peculiar process of secularization with a clearly anti-Hindu bias. It appears, God forbid, the day is not far off when they will think of sounding the note of declaration of independence from Hinduism. Alas! our native self-complacency is standing in the way of due appreciation of this crisis. India is crying her heart out for a saviour of her soul.

The picture of Hindus' plight during the millennium long span of Muslim rule cannot be overdrawn. Eulogizing the role of the sword of Islam in devastating Hindustan and ravaging Hinduism, Amīr Khusrau sings: 'Thanks to the sword of our holy warriors, the whole of this land has become a forest denuded of its thorns by fire. The land has become saturated with the water of the sword, and the dust of Kufr is lying underground. The strong among the Hindus have been trodden under foot, and are constrained to pay tribute with their hand under that of the tribute collector ... Islam became triumphant so gloriously and leaders of Kufr [Hinduism] suffered the scourge of Islam so ignominiously that, had not the *Sharī'ah* [Muslim law, here the Ḥanafite Muslim law] granted

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24. K.S. Lal, *Growth of Muslim Population in Medieval India*, Delhi, 1953, p. 156.

exemption from death by payment of *Jizyah* [poll tax], the very name of the Hindu would have been extinct root and branch.'[25] Likewise, gleefully describing the Hindu predicament under the Sultanate, he puts this statement into the mouth of a subdued Rājā; 'Thanks to the perennial, well established convention of the world, the Hindu has all along been a game of the Turks. The relationship between the Turk and the Hindu cannot be described better than that the Turk is like a tiger and the Hindu, a deer. It has been a long established rule of the whirling sky that the Hindus exist for the sake of the Turk. Being triumphant over them, whenever the Turk chooses to make an inroad upon them, he catches them, buys them, and sells them at will. Since the Hindu happens to be a (wretched) slave in all respects, none need exercise force on his slave. It does not become one to scowl at a goat which is being reared for one's meals. Why should one wield a sharp sword for one who will die by [just] a fierce look?'[26]

The fact of the matter is that Muslim rule in India, as

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25. *Tamāmī kishwar az tegh-ī ghizā-kār*
Chu khāristāṅ'zi ātish gashtah bī-khār
Zamīn-ash ser-khurd-ī āb-i shamshīr
Firau khuftah ghubār-i kufr dar zīr
Zabardastān-i Hindū gashtah pāmāl
Firau-dastāṅ hamah dar dādan-i māl
Badīṅ 'izzat shudah Islām manṣūr
Badāṅ khārī sarān-i kufr maqhū.
Ba-dhimmah 'gar na būdī rukhṣat-ī shar'
Na māṅdī nām-i Hindū'zi 'ṣl tā far'
Amīr Khusrau, *Mathnawiyy-ī Dawal Rānī Khizir Khān*, Rashīd Aḥmad Salīm Anṣārī, ed., Aligarh, 1917, p. 46.

26. *Az īṅ bih ma-dāṅ nisbat-ī Turk-o Hindū*
Ki Turk ast chūṅ sher Hindū chuṅ āhū
'Zi rasm-ī ki raft ast charkh-ī rawāṅ rā
Wujūd az pa'ye Turk shud Hinduāṅ rā
Ki Turk ast ghālib bar-īshāṅ chu koshad
Ki ham gīrad-o ham kharad ham faroshad
Chu Hindū'st bandah ba-har-sāṅ ki bāshad
Kasī zor bar bandah-ī khud na pāshad

elsewhere, was wedded to the cause of Islam, to the propagation of Islam to be precise, and to the blotting out of Kufr/Hinduism altogether. In its eyes, Hindu society was nothing more than a hunting ground of the Muslims. It was a rule of the Muslims, for the Muslims, and by the Muslims, so to speak. 'In the medieval Indian chronicles,' writes K.S. Lal, 'the sovereign is always mentioned as "the king of Islam", the territories of his empire are referred to as the "land of Islam", its armies as "soldiers of Islam", and its religious and judiacial head as "Shaikh-ul-Islam". The monarch was committed to make Islam the true basis of private and public life through the enforcement of the Shariat and to convert the people to the "true faith".'[27] To the Muslims, the Hindu was saleable, enslaveable, and slayable at will. It was a firm policy of some of the Muslim rulers to keep the Hindus in abject poverty and illiteracy so as to incapacitate them from living as Kāfirs. 'The dominant culture in the Gangetic plain,' writes Nirad C. Chaudhuri, 'became Islamic, and the Hindus became a cultural proletariat.'[28] He further observes: 'Thus the course of political history in northern India reduced both Hindu culture and religion to the level of a folk culture and folk religion by depriving it of its elite. Both lost their sophistication and pride. Sanskrit learning virtually disappeared from the region.'[29]

With the loss of royal patronage, the Brāhmaṇa-s and Kṣatriya-s had to give up their caste vocations and become peasants, thereby depriving Hinduism of its higher expression. The destruction of temples and centres of learning dealt a further

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Na shāyad dar ān buz nazar tez kardan
Ki parwardan-ash hast az bahr-i khudan
Yakī k'az nazar tez kardan ba-mīrad
Kasī khanjar-ī tez bahr ash chi gīrad

Amīr Khusrau, *Mathnawiyy-i' Nuh Sipihr*, Wahid Mirza, ed., Calcutta 1948, Sipihr II, pp. 89, 130-131.

27. K.S. Lal, *op.cit.*, pp. 159-160.

28. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Hinduism*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 127.

29. *Loc. cit.*

blow to the leadership of Hindu society. 'Thus Hindu culture here wears an appearance of poverty which was not its old condition. It is the religious expression of this culture which is the "popular Hinduism" of English writers. In reality it was only the remnant, the detritus of the old Hinduism.'[30] The two higher castes suffered further depletion through mass enslavement. The monarchs and other members of the ruling class were interested in handsome boys and girls, who abounded in the higher castes. Alā'u 'd-Dīn Khaljī had 50,000 slaves.[31] Fīrozshāh Tughluq came to have 1,80,000 slaves.[32] Muḥammad Tughluq sold thousands of slaves everyday at throw-away price.[33] And so forth. Indeed, there was unprecedentedly brisk business in the slave markets in India and abroad, thanks to slave hunt under Muslim rule in India. And the slaves had perforce to embrace the religion of their masters. For instance, on the capture of Kalinjar in 1202, 'fifty thousand *kanīz-o ghulām*, having suffered slavery, were rewarded with the honour of Islam.'[34] Muḥammad Ghorī is reported to have converted three to four hundred thousand Khokhars and Tirahias to Islam.[35] In fact, forcible conversions on a large scale have been taking place frequently right from the rise of Muḥammad bin Qāsim down to the fall of Ṭīpū Sulṭān, or rather till today in Pakistan if not even in Kashmir.

Again, it was the policy of the Muslim rulers in general to build mosques, khanqahs, inns, orphanages, and schools of Islamic learning from state funds, that is to say, in effect, from the pockets of the Hindus, but they did not feel concerned to provide anything of the sort for the Hindus.

Certain contemporary historians of leftist persuasion demur to

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30. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
31. Shams Sirāj 'Afīf, cited in K.S. Lal, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 115
33. *Loc. cit.*
34. Firishtah, cited in Lal, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
35. *Loc. cit.*

the division of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim, and British periods first introduced by James Mill. Romila Thaper wonders why he did not choose the word 'Christian' in place of 'British'.[36] Her wonder is set at rest by the foregoing account: Muslim rule served the interests of Islam; British rule did not serve the interests of Christianity.

The fact of the matter is that Islam or the *Ummah* (Muslim culture/community) knows no cooperation on the basis of equality or peaceful coexistence with the *Kāfirs,* to whom it offers at most only four alternatives: Islam, the sword, slavery, or *Jizyah* — at most because non-Ḥanafite Muslim law allows survival on payment of Jizyah to the Jews and the Christians only and no Muslim law permits any non-Muslim faith within Arabia. Such a religion, culture, or rule is a far cry from an indigenous one in this country. Geographical participation can have meaning only by subservience to cultural participation. The nationhood of a nation consists in its self-identity, and an alien culture grafted upon a country subjugated by it and preoccupied in destroying its self-identity does not deserve the appellation of an indigenous culture or part thereof. Indigenousness is not purely a geographical concept; it has cultural overtones supersessive of the claims of geography in the event of a graft threatening extinction of the original stock.

The Sūfī tradition of Islam is adjudged comparatively liberal towards non-Muslims. Such a tone is set by Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī in the famous parable of Moses and the shepherd. The shepherd worships God in his own unsophisticated way, not conforming to the code prescribed by the revealed religion of the day but as best as he was capable of. Moses takes him to task on this account. Upon which God rebuffs Moses for non-recognition of the multiplicity of ways of worship and remarks: 'I have endowed everyone with a temperament of his own, given everyone an idiom

36. Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia, Bipin Chandra, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History,* 4th print, New Delhi, 1984, p. 4.

of his own; so that what is praise for him is blame for thee, what is honey for him is poison for thee, what is light for him is fire for thee, what is rose for him is thorn for thee, what is good for him is evil for thee, what is beautiful for him is ugly for thee. In the people of Hindustan the idiom of Hindustan is praiseworthy; in the people of Sind, the idiom of Sind is praiseworthy. I do not see the outward and the speech; I see the inward and the state [of feeling]. For the heart is the substance and speech an accident. So, the accident is subservient, the substance is the [real] object. The religion of love stands apart from all religions. For lovers the [only] religion and creed is God.' This whole speech of God is introduced with the exhortation to Moses, 'Thou camest to unite, thou didst not come to divide.'[37] Farīd ad-Dīn 'Attār, an earlier Sūfī master (1142/43-1220) of Nishapur, also places devotion above Islam and Kufr.[38] Certain Indian Sūfī-s follow suit. In fact a sizable section of the Sūfī-s had been comparatively free from the proverbial emphasis on coercion for the spread of Islam and for elimination of Kufr. It can boast of a representative like Dārā Shukoh, who made history by rating the Upaniṣads above the Qur'ān and wrote a book entitled *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* in Persian and another entitled *Samudrasaṅgama* in Sanskrit demonstrating that both Sūfism and the Vedānta and thereby Islam and Hinduism are true and essentially one.

But the role of the Sūfī tradition in bridging the gulf between Islam and Hinduism or laying the foundations of a composite culture has been greatly exaggerated. The Sūfī-s belonging to the Chistiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, and Naqshbandiyyah orders and monasteries are found to have fanned or favoured the fanaticism of the Muslim rulers in medieval India. The Qādiriyyah Sūfī-s from Gulbarga, Bidar, and Golconda were the most fanatic

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37. Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawiyy-i Ma'nawī* (with *Payrāhan-i Yūsufī*), 7th print, Lucknow, 1943, Vol. II, pp. 118-119.

38. Farīd ad-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Manṭiq aṭ-Ṭayr*, 15th print, Kanpur, 1896, p. 28, for example.

murderers of Hindus and destroyers of temples. We have already noted the role of Sayyid Nūr ad-Dīn Mubārak Ghaznawī Suhrawardī in setting the Muslim state against the Hindus. Another Sūfī, Jalāl ad-Dīn Bukhārī Suhrawardī, nicknamed Makhdūm-i Jahāniyāń Jahāńgasht, fell ill and the Hindu Dāroghah (a revenue official) of Uchh, named Nawāhūń or Nahāwan visited him to ask after his illness and, full of reverence for the saint, remarked: 'May God restore His Holiness the Makhdūm to health. The blessed soul of the Makhdūm is the last/seal of the saints, even as Muḥammad (God bless and keep him!) was the last/seal of the prophets.'[39] Upon this, the saint observed, 'You have recited half of the *Kalimah* (Islam-confessing formula), recite the other half and become a full-fledged Muslim, failing which you will have to die.' On his refusal, the Hindu was produced before Fīroz Tughluq and got beheaded.[40]

Again, when 'Alā'u 'd-Dīn Khaljī sacked Deogiri, hundreds of Sūfī-s betook themselves to the South and established monasteries, to finance which fat sums were extracted from the local chiefs. Ḥājjī Sayyid alias Sarwar Makhdūm, Ḥusām ad-Dīn, and several other Sūfī-s took part in offensive wars openly, on account of which they were entitled *Qattāl* (the great slayers) and *Kuffār-bhañjan* (destroyers of the Kāfirs).[41] Shaykh Jalāl ad-Dīn Tabrīzī demolished a large temple and constructed a *Takiyah* (*khānqāh*) at Devatalla (Deva Mahal) in Bengal. He also converted a large number of the Hindus there.[42] Another Sūfī Shāh Jalāl of Sylhet (d. 1347), confused by Ibn Baṭṭūtah and many others following him with Shaykh Jalal ad-Dīn Tabrīzī, was also a warrior Sūfī given to forcible conversion of the Hindus. Mīr

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39. *Dhāt-pāk-i makhdūm khātam-ī awliyā' ast, chunāń-ki Muḥammad ṣalla 'llāh-u 'alay-hī wa sallam khātam-ī anbiyā' būd.*
Jamālī Kanboh Dihlawī (d. 1536), *Siyar al-'Ārif'īn*, Delhi, 1893, p. 159.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

41. M.A. Karandikar, *Islam in India's Transition to Modernity*, Bombay, 1968, p. 122.

42. Jamālī, p. 171.

Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī (1314-1385) began to get Hindu temples demolished and the Hindus converted by reckless use of force throughout his sojourn in Kashmir. He is said to have converted 37,000 Hindus to Islam. He commended to the rulers reinforcement of the notorious 'covenant of 'Umar' for the Dhimmī-s.[43] And this in the regime of Sulṭān Quṭb ad-Dīn (1373-89), who followed in the footsteps of his predecessor Sūlṭān Shāh Mīr (regime 1339-1342) in maintaining cordial relations with the Hindus and anticipated Sulṭān Zayn al-'Ābidīn in respecting Hindu shrines, participating in Hindu festivals, and so forth. Quṭb ad-Dīn dressed in the Hindu way, celebrated Hindu festivals, visited Hindu shrines, and once performed a *yajña* to avert a famine. Shāh Mīr had gone to the extent of marrying his daughters to his Brāhmaṇa chiefs.[44] Thanks to the influence of Hamadānī's Sūfī son Mīr Muḥammad (b. 1372), who stepped into his father's

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43. Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī, *Dhakhīrah al-Mulūk*, Amritsar, 1903-4, pp. 117-118, where he has reframed the convenant as under:
    1. The Hindus will not build new temples.
    2. They will not rebuild temples which may have fallen into disrepair.
    3. They will not prevent Muslim travellers from staying in temples.
    4. They will provide them three days' hospitality in their houses.
    5. The *dhimmi*-s will not act as spies nor shelter spies in their houses.
    6. They will not prevent from conversion any one inclined towards Islam.
    7. They will respect Muslims.
    8. They will courteously receive Muslims wishing to attend their meetings.
    9. They will not dress like Muslims.
    10. They will not take Muslim names.
    11. They will not ride horses with saddle and bridle.
    12. They will not possess swords, bows, or arrows.
    13. They will not wear signet rings.
    14. They will not openly sell or drink intoxicating liquor.
    15. They will not abandon their traditional dress.
    16. They will not openly practise their customs amongst Muslims.
    17. They will not build their houses in the neighbourhood of Muslims.
    18. They will not carry or bury their dead near Muslim graveyards.
    19. They will not mourn their dead loudly.
    20. They will not buy Muslim slaves.

44. Jonarāja, 257, for example

shoes after the latter had left Kashmir after failing to pull on well with Quṭb ad-Dīn, Sikandar (1389-1413), a liberal Sulṭān of Kashmir, turned into a ferocious Sulṭān for the Hindus and began to be known as Sikandar Butshikan (iconoclast), and his powerful Brāhmaṇa noble Sūhabhaṭṭa embraced Islam under the name Sayf ad-Dīn and became a terror for the Brāhmaṇa-s. Guided by the teachings of Mīr Muḥammad, Sikandar played havoc with the Hindus through Sayf ad-Dīn, destroyed their temples, undertook forcible conversions, and imposed *Jizyah* on them for the first time in Kashmir.[45] Indeed, he out-Aurangzebed Aurangzeb in his Hindu-persecution-mania. Muslim historians are full of praise for him as an uprooter of Kufr from Kashmir. Shaykh Aḥmad Sarhindī Naqshbandī, nicknamed Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī (1564-1634), strained every nerve to turn the Mughul rule into an engine of repression and total destruction of Hinduism. In his epistles to various quarters, he tries to bring home the idea that 'Islam and Kufr are mutually opposite. A meeting of the two opposites is impossible, and honouring either entails dishonouring the other. Honour of Islam lies in dishonour or of Kufr. Whoever holds the Kāfirs dear renders Muslims humiliated. They (Kāfirs) should be kept at a distance like dogs.... Excellence of Islam lies in this that even mundane concern with them should be avoided and should not be cultivated with them.'[46] His preceptor, Khawājah Bāqī Bi 'llāh (b. 1563-64) 'was highly inflamed when a Hindu physician was brought for his treatment at his death-bed and could be comforted only when it was reported that he was brought at the

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45. *Ibid.*, 596-671; Srīvara, *Zayn-Rājataraṅgiṇī*, otherwise known as *Tṛtīyā Rājataraginī*, 5.75-77.

46. *Islām wa kufr ḍidd-i yak-dīgar and. Iḥtimāl-i jam'-shudan-i īn do ḍidd muḥāl ast wa 'izzat-dādan-i yak-ī rā mustalzim-i khārī-i dīgar ast. 'Izzat-i Islām dar khārī-i kufr ast. Kasī ki ahl-i kufr rā 'aziz dāsht ahl-i Islām rā khār sākht.*
Dar rang-i sagān īshān [kuffār] rā dūr bāyad dāsht....Wa kamāl-i Islām ān ast ki az ān gharaḍ-i dunyāwī nīz bāyad guzasht wa ba-īshān na bāyad pardākht.

instance of his mother.'[47]

Most of the Sūfī-s engaged themselves in proselytizing activities. 'Moplas of the south coast were converted to Islam by the disciples of Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 744), the Dudwālās and Pinjārās of Gujarat by al-Ḥallāj (d. 921), Labbas of Trinchinopally by Niṣār Shāh (d. 1039), Memons of Cutch by Yūsuf-al-dīn Sindhī, the Dā'ūdpotas of Sind and Baluchistan by the Qarāmite missionaries of Sind, the Bohras of Gujarat by Abdullāh Kharrāzī, a tribe of Wakhān and the Āfrīdī Pathāns by Nāṣīr-i Khusrau, and the Khojas of Gujarat by Ismā'īl missionaries like Nūr Satgar. In the Ghaznawid Lahore organized proselytization was begun by Shaykh Ismā'īl Bukhārī (c. 1005); and al-Hujwīrī is reported in hagiological tradition to have converted Rāi Rājū a Hindu general of the Ghaznawids to Islam.'[48] Shaykh Dāwūd of Chati converted fifty to a hundred Hindus each day.'[49] The Mujaddid converted thousands of Kāfirs (*hazārāṅ hazār kuffār*).[50] Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz claimed to have converted hundreds of Hindus.[51]

In 1947, Muslim society succeeded in extorting recognition as a separate culture and nation and getting the country vivisected on that basis. It is another matter that, in order to hide our shamefacedness or out of thoughtless obduracy, we go on harping on the theme of the truncated India's belonging to Hindus and Muslims alike and its culture's being a composite culture, a

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The author then refers to the Qur'ānic teachings against the Kāfirs. Sayyid Aḥmad Sarhindī Naqshbandī Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī, *Maktūbāt-i Imām Rabbānī*, Kanpur, n.d., Vol. I, pp. 165-166.

47. *Kalimāt-i Tayyalāt*, fol. 19b, quoted in S.A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movements in North India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Agra, 1965), p. 189.

48. S. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, 2nd impression, London, 1969, p. 84.

49. 'Abd al-Qādir Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab at-Tawārīkh*, Vol. III, Wolsele Haig, Eng. tr., Calcutta, 1925, pp. 57-60.

50. See Saiyid AṭharAbbās Rizvī, *A History of Sūfism in India*, New Delhi, 1983, Vol. II, p. 428.

51. Shāh 'Abd al 'Azīz, *Malfūzāt*, Meerut, 1896-7, p. 22

culture composed of Hindu and Muslim religio-cultural traditions.

Granted that, even against the nation's will as also at the expense of much that was precious in our perennial culture, there did take place some give and take between the two communities or cultures the impact of which is noticeable even today, yet it must be borne in mind that the process failed to culminate in the emergence of a composite culture worth the name. Peaceful, if not constructive, coexistence is the *sine qua non* of anything composite, much more so of composite culture, and we have seen that precisely this has been lacking here all through. The ethos of Islam is too radically different from, exclusive of, and incompatible with that of Hinduism and its attitude too uncompromising for it to join hands with any other culture. In fact, the Qur'ān and the Prophet forcefully forbid the Muslims to befriend the Kāfirs,[52] even the best of whom are inferior to even Muslim slaves.[53] The Prophet goes to the length of ruling that one who follows the example of some other people actually belongs to them (*Man tashabbaha bi-qawmin fa hua min-hum*).

We do have an eclectic architecture, which owes its existence primarily to remodelling of or outright new construction (of mosques, khānqāhs, tombs, palaces, etc.) on temples and other Hindu buildings demolished by the Muslim rulers, secondarily to the extensive use of native materials, skills, and styles, and tertiarily to the natural tendency to imitate the ways of the powers that be. It has all taken place on the physical level and has had nothing to do with meaning and motif, in which alone does art consist *qua* art. The Muslims have been religiously indifferent to, if not contemptuous of, Indian sculpture. Thanks to the taste of the Sūfī-s, the Muslims took some fancy to Indian music. The main gamut of Indian literature has also been untinged with Muslim literature and historico-cultural allusions.

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52 Āl'Imrān (3) 28, 118, 119; an Nisā (4) 144, al-Mā'idah (5) 51, 57

53 Al-Baqarah (2) 221

Poets like Jāyasī, Raḥīm, and Raskhān are rare phenomena. So are saints like Kabīr, Nānak and Gharīb Das. They attempted a synthesis of the two cultural streams in the field of literature in their own way. But their endeavours were severely limited and short-lived. They failed to be popular amongst and influence the Muslims.

Urdu language and literature, the much-vaunted symbols or vehicles of composite culture, are not the result of intermingling of Hinduism and Islam but reflect the Muslim image in Indian garb, whose yarn is predominantly Islamic and whose embroidery, too, is imported from without. Iqbāl appears to be sincere in his confession, 'Let my jar be ever so *'Ajamī* (non-'Arabic, barbarian), 'Arabic my wine is. Let my song be ever so Indian, 'Arabic my tune is':

'Ajamī khum hai to kyā may to Ḥijāzī hai merī
Naghmah Hindī hai to kyā lay to Hijāzī hai merī

On the whole, Urdu culture could not cross the deadline of Muslim culture. Saudā, the classical Urdu poet, for example, refers to India as an unholy land:

Gar ho kashish-i shāh-i Khurāsān to 'Saudā'
Sajdah na karūṅ Hind kī nāpāk zamīṅ par

(If the king of Khurasan draw me near, I would not bow (to God) on the unholy land of Hindustan.)

Likewise, pre-Muslim Indian history has never been fortunate enough to be owned, nor have the Hindu heroes and savants been fortunate enough to be honoured, by the Muslim community. Indeed, even the Hindu fighters for freedom from the British yoke go unsung and unwept by the Muslims save for Nehru and that, too, for his pro-Muslim stance. So far as we can see, even Āzād, the model 'nationalist Muslim', has had no word of appreciation for the Hindu men of destiny, ancient or modern, with the natural exception of Gandhi. And the question of the Hindus being

impressed by Muslim history and heroes as their own history and heroes is ruled out by the very nature of the case. Nevertheless, however, some of them have gone out of their way in showering words of praise over the historical role of Islam and in sometimes defending such persecutors of the Hindus and Hinduism as Aurańgzeb and 'Alā'u 'd-Dīn Khalji.

The opposition between the Hindu and the Muslim perceptions of history is thrown into bold relief by Iqbāl, who is all praise for Aurańgzeb and all condemnation for Akbar and Dārā Shukoh: '(Aurańgzeb was the last arrow in our quiver in the war between Kufr and Islam. Akbar sowed the seed of irreligion, which grew in the character of Dārā... (But) the lightning of his (Aurańgzeb's) sword burnt down the barn of irreligion and lighted the lamp of Islam in our convivial assembly.':

Darmiyān-ī kārzār-ī Kufr-o Dīṅ
Tarkash-ī mā rā khadańg-ī ākhirīṅ
Tukhm-i ilḥād-ī ki Akbar parwarīd
Bāz andar fiṭrat-ī Dārā damīd
Ḥaqq guzīd az Hind 'Ālamgīr rā
Āṅ faqīr-ī ṣāḥib-ī shamshīr rā
Barq-i tigh-ash khirman-ī ilḥād sokht
Sham' -i Dīṅ dar maḥfil-i mā bar-farokht

Now, Christian culture, too, has had its impact here less, however, than Islam. Its direct impact is discernible in the ideology of the Brahma Samaj and in the spirit of service characterizing the Ramakrishna Mission. On the other side, Christianization as also Islamization results, by and large, in denationalization. The moment one converts to Christianity or Islam one's love for and self-identification with India undergoes abatement. This process gets inordinately accelerated in the event of conversion to Islam. The convert's adherence and allegiance to the mainstream of Indian culture gets diluted and dissipated often beyond recognition, if not totally wiped out. The great traditions of the *ṛṣi-*

s and *muni*-s, ascetics and saints, Tīrthaṅkara-s and Buddha-s, Siddha-s and Yogin-s, Vālmīki-s and Vyāsa-s, Rāma-s and Kṛṣṇa-s, and so forth cannot catch the fancy of the Christian and Muslim hearts, which have an innate and self-existent predilection for the Biblical and Qur'ānic prophets and personages. All Indian history prior to the advent of Islam or Christianity becomes an age of darkness for the convert. Indian heroes become irrelevant, if not villains outright.

Parsi culture is also an alien culture, but alien in name only, for, tolerant from the first, it has got blended with Indian culture almost beyond recognition. Being the relics of the Iranian branch of the great Indo-European Aryan family, a branch sisterliest to the Iranian branch of the Aryans, and being persecuted and forced to seek asylum in this country by the Islamic invaders, the Parsis have grown more and more non-different from the Hindus. Besides, the Parsis' is not a proselytizing religion, hence they do not pose any coexistential problem to others. Their identity stands out in and is confined to their way of worship and disposal of dead, chiefly. And they are too few and far between. Therefore, Parsi culture constitutes an almost infinitesimal subculture in this country. Likewise, forest and hill-dwelling tribes subsisting on the fringes of the vast Indian social system are fast losing their cultural identity, which they are bound to, thanks to the process of their modernistic acculturation and assimilation in the body politic. Presently, they are so cut off from the mainstream of Indian life and yet so much on the way to assimilation therein that their cultures cannot claim a better status than vanishing sub-cultures or rather side-cultures.

The greatest impact that our culture displays at present is that of Western culture, whose chief traits are modernity and scientific temper. This modern, scientific culture is fast assuming global proportions and appears to be out to devour all national cultures. Indian culture, too, is catching its hues, which are growing faster and faster. These are good, bad, and indifferent, of course. We

must be on our guard against the bad hues. Our need to guard against evil influences of the Semitic cultures is much greater. Our leaders are propagating the myth that the confluence of cultures is always good, is all good. Their mad propaganda of composite culture points in the same direction. It is forgotten that, not to speak of intermingling of cultures, sometimes even the contact of another culture proves unwholesome, fatal.[54] Therefore, if a commingling of Indian and other cultures like Islamic did take place during the medieval times, we would do well to examine whether the extraneous elements that have entered into Indian culture are in order or are such as to spell disaster for it.

As a matter of fact, Muslim culture invaded Indian culture not to make friends with it but to wipe it out. Its declared aim was Islamization and method Crescentade/Jihād, which changed its colours and contours according to changing circumstances. Hence Muslim culture cannot be said to be an integral part of Indian culture and must be regarded as an anticulture or counter-culture in our body politic.

Now, let us examine whether it would be proper to designate as composite culture the combined gamuts of cultural traditions — Vedic-Purāṇic, Buddhist, Jaina, Lokāyata, etc. — having indigenous origin.

Well, India did produce the Lokāyatà philosophy, which could not fructify, however, into a Lokāyata culture. It could not in fact have, as Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, the great Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher of circa 1000 A.D. would have it:[55]

> *Na hi Lokāyate kiñcit kartavyam upadiśyate.*
> *Vaitaṇḍikakathaivāsau, na punaḥ kaścid āgamah.*

That is: 'The Lokāyata is not an *Āgama*, viz. not a guide to cultural

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54. See Harsh Narain, 'Prācya aur Pāścātya Saṁskṛtiyoṅ kā Sammilana Varadāna yā Abhiśāpa', *Saṁskṛti*, 27 (March, 1985), pp. 32-35

55. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, *Nyāyamañjarī* (CSS, Varanasi, 1936), Pramāṇa-Prakaraṇa, p. 247.

living, not a system of do's and don'ts; hence it is nothing but irresponsible wrangling.' In fact, the Lokāyata operated and developed as a tradition of universal criticism or negativism, without caring to evolve a durable or regular life-order, a socio-cultural order, of its own, with the result that it failed to commend itself to society at large. No wonder that a branch of the Lokāyata, the Nīlapaṭa school, so called because its members dressed in blue, were responsible for inception of what may be called an inculture (*apa-saṅskṛti*), a tradition of wanton living, about which it is said:[56]

Na nadyo mada-vāhinyo, na ca māṁsa-mayā nagāḥ,
Na ca nārī-mayaṁ viśvaṁ, kathaṁ Nīlapaṭaḥ sukhī?

That is: 'How can the Nīlapaṭa feel happy till rivers begins to overflow with wine, the mountains are made of meat, and the world is full of women?' This sect violated all socio-cultural norms, which led to their massacre to a man by king Bhoja.[57]

Jainism, too, failed to develop any cultural identity of its own. Jaina ascetics can be called culture-disregarding, thanks to their life-negation and non-participation in socio-cultural life. On the contrary, the Jaina householders are as good Hindus as others, culturally speaking. To be sure, elements of Hindu religion, philosophy, and culture are so ingrained in the Jaina tradition that the latter leaves us no alternative but to regard it as part and parcel of Hindu culture. Jainism shares with the Hindus their pantheon, practice of propitiation of the dead, caste rules, and even untouchability. According to one of their texts, water of a well, pool, tank, etc. dug up by the untouchables must not be used for drinking or bathing:[58]

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56. *Purātanaprabandhasaṅgraha*, p. 19.
57. Śīlāṅka, *Sūtrakṛtāṅga-Bhāṣya*, pp. 280-81.
58. *Dharmarasika*, 3.59.

Antyajaiḥ khanitāḥ kūpā, vāpī, puṣkariṇī, saraḥ
Teṣāṁ jalaṁ na tu grāhyaṁ snāna-pānāya ca kvacit.

Not only this. It is also laid down that one ought to give up muttering prayers when an untouchable appears, speaks, hears, sneezes, passes wind, and gapes in one's presence:[59]

Vratacyutāntyajātīnāṁ darśane, bhāsāṇe, śrute,
kṣute, 'dhovatā-gamane, jṛmbhaṇe japam utsṛjet.

Some of their texts open the door for importation of much more from Hinduism. It is ruled, for example, that the Jainas can accept any injunctions from others subject to the condition that the injunctions do not militate against the ideals and vows of Jainism:[60]

Sarva eva hi Jainānāṁ pramāṇaṁ laukiko vidhiḥ
Yatra samyaktva-hānir na, yatra na vrata-dūṣaṇam.

Buddhism, too, is basically a life-negating religion, having little interest in social order, strictly speaking. The Buddha has prescribed rules of discipline, compiled under the title *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, for the monks but precious little to govern the conduct of householders, rulers, and others. And the process of invitation to or initiation into monkhood is a process of breaking away from socio-cultural life in effect,[61] leaving the rest of society to fend for itself in planning socio-cultural conduct, with the result that it has to fall back upon the mainstream of Indian culture called Hindu culture for it. Some classical philosophers — Vācaspati Miśra (circa 900 A.D.), Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, and Udayana (circa 1000 A.D.), to be precise — feel amused at the phenomenon and make a fling

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59. *Ibid.*, 3.33.

60. Somadeva Sūri, quoted in Muni Nathamal, *Ahiṁsātattvadarśana*, p. 175.

61. See Harsh Narain, 'Śrāmaṇya aur Nirvāṇa kā Lokavyavasthā se Sambandha', *Dārśanika Trāimāsika*, XXII, 2 (April, 1977), pp. 99-110.

at the Buddhists for the latter's lack of a comprehensive code of conduct governing all stations in and stages of life and their dependence willy-nilly on Vedic-Smṛtic code of conduct. Vācaspati Miśra, the versatile genius responsible for commentaries on almost all orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, remarks that the Buddhists have no religio-social code — neither one to govern social organization nor one to guide individuo-familial life-order, on which account they have perforce to lean upon the injunctions in the Vedic-Smṛtic scriptures.[62] Jayanta Bhaṭṭa contends that it is under the guidance of Vedic authority only that the Buddhists and others like them treat the Caṇḍāla-s etc. as untouchables.[63] Udayana, the great Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher, observes that the Buddhists and others like them have no alternative but to perform Vedic rites, maintain the distinction of touchables and untouchables, and atone for violation of these rules.[64]

To tell the truth, the entire gamut of what is called the Śramaṇa (ascetic) tradition owes its origin to the perennial Indian religio-cultural matrix describable as *Sanātana Dharma.* Far from viewing his *weltanschauung* as a revolt from this tradition, the Buddha declares the former as a fulfilment of the latter. He is all praise for the Śramaṇa-s and Brāhmaṇa-s of old, Vedic seers, the

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62. न चैतेषामागमा वर्णाश्रमाचारव्यवस्थाहेतवो, न खलु निषेकाद्याः क्रियाः श्मशानान्ताः प्रजानामेते विदधति। न हि प्रमाणीकृत-बौद्धाद्यागमा अपि लोकयात्रायां श्रुतिस्मृतीतिहास-पुराणनिरपेक्षागममात्रेणा प्रवर्तन्ते। अपि तु तेऽपि सांवृतमेतदिति ब्रुवाणा लोकयात्रायां श्रुत्यादीनेवानुसरन्ति।

Vācaspati Miśra, Nyāyavārtikatātparyaṭīkā, CSS, Varanasi, 1925, 2.1.69. p. 432.

63. बौद्धादयोऽपि दुरात्मानो वेदप्रामाण्यनियमिता एव चण्डालादिस्पर्शं परिहरन्ति।

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

64. नास्त्येव तद्दर्शनं यत्र सांवृतमित्युक्त्वाऽपि गर्भाधानाद्यन्त्येष्टिपर्यन्तां वैदिकी क्रियां जनो नानुतिष्ठति, स्पृश्यास्पृश्यादिविभागं वा नानुमनुते, व्यतिक्रमे चाचमनादिप्रायश्चित्तं वा नानुतिष्ठति।

Udayana, *Ātmatattvaviveka*, Varanasi, 1983, p. 433.

quadritype organization of society called *Varṇa*-order. He never spoke against the division of *Ārya* (freeman) and *Dāsa* (slave). Thus, Buddhist culture does not merit treatment as separate or different from Hindu culture. It is just a subculture thereof.

The net result of the foregoing discussion is that our national culture, Indian culture, is a unity, describable as Aryan culture, Hindu culture, *Ārṣā* (seers') culture, *Sanātana-Dharma*, *Mānava* (Manu-s') culture, or even greater Vedic culture as comprehensive of its pre-Vedic phase. Why *Mānava* culture? Because, traditionally speaking, it was inaugurated, so to speak, shaped, patronized, developed, and advanced by a pre-Vedic gallaxy of Manu-s mentioned not only in the epics and the Purāṇa-s but in the Vedas themselves. The Vedic seer prays to his Gods not to deflect him from the ancestral path of Manu:[65]

Mā naḥ pathaḥ pitryān Mānavād adhi dūram naiṣṭa parāvataḥ

(O Gods! do not let me deflect from the ancestral path of Manu). So, the Buddhist, the Jaina, and other 'non-Hindu' cultures rooted in the Indian soil are not independent, self- contained cultures worth the name but are part and parcel of the Greater Hindu Culture, of perennial Indian culture, are subcultures, pure and simple. As pointed out above, there is no such thing as Lokāyata culture as such, and that, if it did exist to any extent and in any form whatever, it would have been no better than a subculture, to the greater culture. The modern Lokāyata, viz. secularism, is of course evolving, if it has not yet evolved, its own culture, and it appears that in the long run it is destined to merge with the scientific world-culture which is in the offing. But it has not yet been able to isolate itself from the perennial Hindu culture, like a subculture to which it is growing up. Needless to mention that it is Hindu culture which is providing shelter and nourishment to it. Were it Islamic cultue instead of Hindu culture, secularism would

65. *Ṛg-Veda* 8.30.3

die in infancy, as has happened and is still happening in the bulk of the countries under Muslim rule. As a matter of fact, it is its time-tested traditions of tolerance and tranquility that go naturally to orient it towards universal brotherhood and cosmopolitanism, as represented by not only Vedic-Upaniṣadic seers and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Buddha and the Bodhisattva-s, but in our day by Vivekānanda and Rāmatīrtha, Gandhi and Nehru, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan.

Thus Indian culture is Hindu culture: even if predominantly, it is predominance that gives the name. Muslim and Christian cultures are counter-cultures. Lokāyata culture is a non-culture or subculture. Śramaṇa culture is a subculture. And Parsi culture, too, is something like that, practically speaking.

In point of fact, Hindu culture alone deserves the credit of recognition as *the* national culture (*abhimānin*) of this country, as the culture owning and possessing this great nation, along with other Indian-born cultures like Buddhist and Jaina cultures as its subcultures, Muslim and Christian cultures being in the nature of tenant-cultures, parasitic (*anuśayin*) cultures, or out-and-out counter-cultures. The distiction of master-possessor-owner culture and tenant-parasitic culture has its own significance. Our body is inhabited by a host of souls, out of which the master-soul, the body-owning or body-possessing soul, the primary and predominant soul, is only one, which is fully responsible for the body and by which alone the body and the embodied are defined. The other souls inhabiting the body are secondary souls, which own no direct responsibility for the body save as they are constrained to.[66] Among the secondary souls, some are innocent parasites, which tend usually to do good to the body without doing it any harm, whereas there are other secondary souls which prove harmful to the body, the good of which lies in their removal by use of medicines etc. The incultures/counter-cultures come under this

66. cf., Saṅkara, *Śārīrakabhāṣya* 3.1.24.

head, with this difference, however, that, where there is the will there is the way to humanize or indigenize them.

As indicated at the outset, one must be clear in one's mind that, whereas there is hardly any warrant for holding Indian culture to be a composite culture the way it is flaunted to, despite its being influenced and even inspired by other cultures in some measure, there can be no gainsaying the fact that Indian society and civilization are composite society and civilization. And this must also be perfectly clear to us that civilization does have its impact on culture, that sometimes a mighty civilization helps transform a culture even beyond recognition, and that a mightly culture helps evolve its own civilization. Today, there is little room for civilizational differences. All civilizations are on the way to transformation into a world civilization. Culture cannot afford to remain uninfluenced by the phenomenon. Indian culture is still maintaining its identity, its native genius, thanks to the inexhaustible sum of its potentialities and capacity to adjust itself to changing time-place-circumstance (*deśa-kāla-nimitta*). It would not be going too far to suggest that any world-civilization, and world-culture, will be incomplete without drawing profusely upon it for its spiritual or religio-philosophic content. But this is a long story which cannot be told in the space-budget at our disposal.

To resume the thread of the discussion, Muslim and Christian cultures remain alien here in intent and content despite the former's co-existence with the mainstream of Indian culture for more than a thousand years and the latter's for at least two centuries and a half. No use mincing matters or practising self-deception. Says Dharmakīrti, the great Buddhist philosopher, 'If this is what is relished by things as they are, who are we?':[67]

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67. Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārtika* 2.2.210.

'Yadīdaṁ svayam arthānāṁ rocate, tatra ke vayam?'

Our culture is not composite the way our leaders glibly and rather irresponsibly talk about and want us to believe. Even so, efforts can and should be made to popularize the way of Zayn al-'Ābidīn, 'Alā'u 'd-Dīn Ḥusayn Shāh, Akbar, Dārā Shukoh, and suchlike among the Muslims. It is futile, as was sought to be done by Abu 'l-Kalām Āzād, to exhort the Muslims to hark back to the so-called joint nationalism or single nation idea, *ummamtun wāḥidah*, envisaged in the historic agreement concluded between the Quraysh led by the prophet of Islam and the Jews of Medinah shortly after the hegirah.[68] As remarked by Abu 'l-'Alā Maudūdī, and rightly, it was in the nature of a military alliance, which fell apart in two or three years, some Jews having been deported and the rest killed to a man, Besides, to be sure, such an agreement would be barred by the Qur'ānic verses of Jihād. This point cannot be dilated upon in this work.

Again, instead of harping upon the so-called secularism in season and out of season, our leaders would do well to find ways and means to inculcate in the Muslim psyche a love for Indian religious, philosophical, and cultural traditions, the need to shed their Kāfir-complex, and openness enough to embark upon an era of give and take with others, with a view to clearing the way to intercultural understanding and, if you choose the expression, to composite culture. The Muslim system of education current in thousands of *Madrasah*-s scattered all over the country acts as a bulwark for what S. Maqbūl Aḥmad calls 'political fanaticism'[69] and turns out still more thousands of Hindu-haters every year. The mis-schooled Muslim graduates of these institutions need to be de-

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68. Ibn Hishām, *Sīratu Sayyida-nā Muḥammad*, 'Abd al-Jalīl Siddīqī & Ghulām Rasūl Mihr, Urdu trs., under the title *Sīratu 'n-Nabiyy-i Kāmil*, Delhi, 1982, Vol. I, p. 554.

69. S. Maqbūl Aḥmad, 'Madrasa System of Education and Indian Muslim Society', *Indian and Contemporary Islam*, S.T. Lokhandwalla, ed., Simla, 1971, p. 32.

schooled and then re-schooled for adapting them to cooperative coexistence with the Hindus. To this end, their inflated sense of identity needs also to be brought within limits. We are inclined to believe that re-education along the foregoing lines and inculcation of scientific temper in them which is the moving spirit behind Sir Sayyid's unfinished commentary on the Qur'ān can work wonders and pave the way to their indigenization/Indianization/national integration.

INDIA : *DĀR AL-ḤARB* OR *DĀR AL-ISLĀM* ?

The Qur'ān bifucrates humanity into the Faithful/Mu'mins/ Muslims and the Unfaithful/Infidels/Kāfirs, and the latter into Scripturaries and Polytheists/Idolaters/Mushriks. It rules out lasting cooperative, friendly, or even peaceful co-existence of the Muslims with the Kāfirs, all contemporary apologetic and rationalization to the contrary notwithstanding. The quintessence of its commands to the Muslims vis-a-vis the Kāfirs (in a *Dār al-Ḥarb*) as perceived, preached, and practised by the Prophet, his Companions and Followers, and later Crescentaders and theologians/jurists, can be put as under:

1. Try to convert the Kāfirs to Islam.

2. If any of them resist,

   (1) try to consign them to the grave before Allāh consigns them to the hell-fire, plunder and loot their property (*al-anfāl/al-ghanā'im*) movable and immovable (*al-amwāl wa'l-amlāk*), enslave them, menfolk (*usrā'*) and womenfolk and children (*sabāyā*) alike;

   (2) or, where imposition of *Jizyah* is permissible, let the Kāfirs escape death and compound their offence of *Kufr* (infidelity) by disgracefully paying *Jizyah, abjectly surrendering to the brute force of the Muslims, and suffering all sorts of indignities as* Dhimmī-s (protected ones);

   (3) or, again, if you find yourselves too weak to deal with

the Kāfirs the way outlined above, take recourse to hejira (*hijrah*) and bide your time.

Taking their cue from such Qur'ānic provisions, the Faithful were led to bifurcate the world into two opposite domains: *Dār al-Islām* (the domain of Islam) or, as Muḥammad bin Aḥmad as-Sarkhasī would have it,[1] *Dār al-Muslimīn*, and *Dār al-Ḥarb* (the domain of war). Sometimes, a third domain is also proposed, particularly by Imām Shāfi'ī and Imām Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan, conceptually midway between the two and designated alternatively as *Dār al-'Aḥd, Dār-as Ṣulḥ, Dār al-Amn, Dār al-Amān,* and *Dār as-Salm*. Shaykh Abū Zuharah, a contemporary Egyptian scholar, regards it as a separate domain in its own right.

But there is hardly any reason to regard it as more than a variety of *Dār al-Ḥarb*. It is, as a matter of fact, a *Dār al-Ḥarb* qualified by a purely temporary truce or suspension of hostilities, for the simple reason that the Muslim psyche rules out permanent settlement with *Kufr* on terms of equality. Indeed, in Islam, as is well recognized outside the world of Islamic apologetics, war with the Kāfirs is the norm and peace is contingent upon special circumstances. This is why the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah counts the so-called *Dār as-Ṣulḥ* as part of *Dār al-Islām* and its non-Muslim subjects as rebels, which, to all intents and purposes, is indistinguishable from a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, so far as the possibility of war against the rebels is concerned. If it is a *Dār al-Islām* at all, it is a *Dār al-Islām* only *de jure*. This will be clear as we proceed.

Dār al-Islām is held to be of three kinds:

1. Ḥaram/Ḥaramayn Sharīfayn (Mecca and Medinah), which only the Muslims are permitted to visit and inhabit and which the Kāfirs cannot even pass through. However, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah permits the Scripturaries to pass through it.

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1. Muḥammad bin Aḥmad as-Sarkhasī, *Kitāb al-Mabsūṭ*, Vol. X, Bāb al-Murtaddīn, p. 114.

2. Ḥijāz, the heartland of Arabia, including the Ḥaramayn Sharīfayn (Mecca and Medinah), which barring the Ḥaramayn Sharīfayn, of course, the Kāfirs may only pass through but where they are not permitted to bury or cremate their dead. The Prophet is traditioned to have willed that no Kāfir should be permitted to reside there.

3. The rest of the territories of the world.

Ḥijāz is ordained as an exclusive preserve of Islam, for, to follow Abu'l-Kalām Āzād,[1] the Muslims could take refuge in it in the event of hejira (*hijrah*) or expulsion from a *Dār al-Ḥarb*.

The motto of a sizable section of the theologians is: Once a *Dār al-Islām*, always a *Dār al-Islām*. But the consensus is that a *Dār al-Islām* does become a *Dār al-Ḥarb* under certain conditions. Thus, *Dār al-Ḥarb* is of two kinds:

1. A territory that has never been a *Dāṛ al-Islām*.

2. A territory that is no longer a *Dār al-Islām*

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, as understood by as-Sarkhasī (*loc. cit.*) a *Dār al-Islām* changes into a *Dār al-Ḥarb* under the following three conditions taken together:

1. When the territory in question adjoins a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, without any *Dār al-Islām* intervening between the two.

2. When no Muslim or Dhimmī therein enjoys the security due to him on the basis of former protection rights.

   If even one such person enjoys such security, it would mean that the Mushriks/Kāfirs have not yet established their paramountcy and ascendancy fully (*tamām*) and hence the territory has not ceased to be a *Dār al-Islām*.

3. When the rule of the Mushriks/Kāfirs is freely and

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2. Abu 'l-Kalām Āzād, *Khuṭbāt*, Lahore, n.d., p. 42.

absolutely exercised (*yaẓharū aḥkāmu 'sh-shirk-i fī-hā*).

If even one Islamic regulation (such as *adhan* or circumcision) remains in force, it will indicate that they have not yet been able to establish their absolute rule, and hence the territory has not ceased to be a *Dār al-Islām*. On the Imām's behalf, Muḥammad bin Maḥmūd al-Ashtrawshanī adds that, where even a part of the causal situation is intact, the effect remains extant, too, by the force of the former's endurance.[3]

The foregoing ruling of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah is rejected by his own illustrious disciples, Imām Abū Yūsuf and Imām Muḥammad, nicknamed as *Sāḥibān* (the two masters), who lay down that the mere replacement of the rule of the Muslims by the rule of the Mushriks/Kāfirs and the merest inception of the latter's dispensation are enough to convert a *Dār al-Islām* into *a Dār al-Ḥarb*. In his *al-Mabsūṭ*, however, Imām Muḥammad also observes: 'When a Country of Islam falls into the hands of the Infidels, it remains a Country of Islam *if the Infidels retain Muhammadan Governors and Muhammadan Judges and do not introduce their own Regulations.*'[4]

When the Marathas came to power, beyond exacting Chauth (one-fourth), they did not interfere with or disturb the actual administration by Muslim Subedārs and Qāḍīs, who continued, on demise, to be succeeded by new ones of the same religion. That is why India continued to be regarded as the *Dār al-Islām* as it was under Muslim rule.

The East India Company in its early phases followed suit. All-powerful as they were, they left the Muslim administration of the

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3. Muḥammad bin Maḥmūd al-Ashtrawshanī, *Kitāb al-Fuṣūl*, Vol. I, leaf 2, Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband MSS, quoted by Sa'īd Aḥmad Akbarābādī, 'Hindustān kī Shar'ī Ḥaythiyyat', *Burhān*, 1967, vide *Naqshatu 'l-Maṣdūr*, etc., Aligarh Muslim University, n.d., p. 61.

4. Imām Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-Mabsūṭ*, cited in W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (reprint of 3rd ed., Delhi: Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1969), p. 122

provinces intact, retained the Sharī'ah as the law of the land, to be operated by the Qāḍī-s, and acted in the name of the Muslim emperor. 'Indeed,' writes Hunter,[5] 'so afraid was the East India Company of assuming the insignia of sovereignty, that long after its attempts to govern the country through the Musalmans had broken down, in consequence of the indescribable corruption of the Muhammadan administration, it still pretended to be the Deputy of a Musalman Monarch. It is a matter of history how this pretence in the end sank into a contemptible farce and how we struck coins in the name of the King of Delhi, while our Resident was paying the poor pensioner a monthly allowance of his table expenses.' Hunter adds a little later that 'had we hastened by a single decade our formal assumption for the sovereignty, we should have been landed in a Muhammadan rising infinitely more serious than the mutinies of 1857. The whole status of the Musalmans would have been suddenly changed. We should have been in the position of an Infidel power who has seized and occupied a Country of Islam.'[6] With remarkable patience the Company waited for exactly a hundred years (1765 to 1864) to let the Muslim power wither away by imperceptible gradations, so that it is difficult to put one's finger on any given year or even decade as that of the change-over. It was by Act XI of 1864, however, that the British government did away with the institution of the Qāḍī-s, the last vestige of Muslim rule in India.

It appears that the difference between Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and the *Sāḥibān* is not so fundamental as it is made out to be. The former seems in effect to have in mind *Dār al-Islām de jure*, whereas what agitates the mind of the *Sāḥibān* is *Dār al-Islām de facto*. *Dār al-Islām de jure* is a territory which has not yet been completely infidelized and thereby has not yet shed its character of *Dār al-Islām*. For example, even though, during the declining

5. Hunter, pp. 129-130.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Mughul rule, real power passed into the hands of the Marathas, the Sikhs, the Rajputs, and, above all, the British — all infidels —, even Shāh Walī Allāh (1703-1762) did not deem India to be a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, for, as indicated earlier, the Mughuls continued for long as the titular head of the state. In fact, a *Dār al-Ḥarb* and a Mushrik-ruled *Dār al-Islam* both invite Jihād, but, while hejira (wholesale exodus) from the former is the second sanctioned alternative, this is not available to the Muslims of the latter. Something more about it in the sequel.

Certain Indian theologians have sought to simplify the definitions of *Dār al-Islām* and *Dār al-Ḥarb* in a more straightforward manner and much more in keeping with the spirit of Islam. According to Sayyid Muḥammad Miyāṅ of Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā'i Hind, *Dār al-Islām* means a Muslim state, whereas *Dār al-Ḥarb* means a non-Muslim state even though there be no war between the Muslims and the non-Muslims and the latter enjoy the fruits of equality before law. According to Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (1746-1824), Shāh Walī Allāh's illustrious son, a territory remains a *Dār al-Islām* as long as the war between the Muslims and Kāfirs continues. He adds that the territory ceases to be a *Dār al-Islam* and changes into a *Dār al-Ḥarb* even when the Muslims are unable to fight and yet live in peace, retain their possessions, and have full religious freedom, thanks to the tolerant temper and benignity of the Kāfirs rather than to the prowess and dominance of the Muslims.[7] Obviously, the Shāh's emphasis is not on freedom but on dominance as decisive on the issue. His position is a far cry from a host of the theologians' and runs counter to the ruling given by Ibn 'Ābidīn Shāmī,[8] to the effect that a territory will not turn into a *Dār al-Ḥarb* if regulations of both the Muslims and the Mushriks/Kāfirs are in force therein. That is to say, if a territory is governed/administered by the Muslims and the Kāfirs

7. Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Fatāwā*, Delhi, 1311/1893-94, I, pp. 162-163.
8. Ibn 'Ābidīn Shāmī, *Radd al-Muḥtār*, Vol. III, p. 275.

jointly or in their respective spheres — let us add, on the basis of equality or otherwise —, it cannot be regarded as a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, according to Shāmī but must be regarded as a *Dār al-Ḥarb* according to Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz.

When in 1803, dealing a crushing defeat to the Marathas, the British forces entered Delhi triumphantly and there was no hope left of saving the Mughul throne, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz issued the famous *fatwā* (decree) that India had turned into a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, insofar as 'in administration and justice, in matters of law and order, in the domain of trade, finance, and collection of revenue — everywhere the Kāfirs are in power'. Although, as indicated above, real power had passed into the hands of the Kāfirs prior to it, reducing the Mughul emperor to the status of a mere titular ruler, even Shāh Walī Allāh entertained some hope of resuscitation of the Muslim rule, to which end he invited Aḥmad Shāh Abdālī to teach a lesson to the Kāfirs.

Now, those who took Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz's verdict seriously had only two courses open: Jihād or hejira. Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd and Shāh Ismā'īl Shahīd declared Jihād on Mahārājā Ranjīt Singh and came to grief. In 1857, thirty-eight 'Ulamā' of Delhi issued a *fatwā* followed by another by many others against the British government, which brought forth an uprising of ninety thousand 'mutineers' in Delhi.

Parallel to the movement of Jihād, certain 'Ulamā' started the movement of hejira in 1841. Sometime after, they brought out what may be called a manifesto of hejira under the title *Hijrat kā Risālah*, discovered in 1869 and published for the first time in June 1988.[9]

Certain other 'Ulamā' chose to call British India a *Dār al-'Aḥd*, or a *Dār al-Amān* respectively, on the ground that the Muslims enjoyed complete religious freedom during the British regime. Iqbāl sardonically remarks:

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9. *Hijrat kā Risālah*, *Ma'ārif*, CXLI, 6 (June, 1988), pp. 438-440.

Hai Hind meṅ mullā ko jo sajde kī ijāzat
Nādāṅ yeh samajhtā hai ki Islām hai āzād

(Thanks to the freedom that the Mullāh enjoys to bow down (to God), the fool thinks that Islam is free).

It is usually forgotten, however, that, even if British India was a *Dār al-Islām*, the doors of Jihād, were by no means closed to the Muslims, who had lost their sway to the Kāfirs after all. Ḥijāz was a full-fledged *Dār al-Islām* during the Caliphate, yet the first Caliph had to declare Jihād on the apostates. According to the Sharī'ah, 'If infidels press hard or occupy a town in a Country of Islam (*Bilād-ul-Islām*), it is absolutely incumbent (*Farz-'ain*) on every Muhammadan man, woman, and child to hurt and drive away the Infidel Ruler.'[10] Hunter adds, 'This is so established a rule, that the King of Bokhara was compelled by his subjects to declare Holy War against the Russians as soon as they entered the Country of Islam.'[11] Indeed, during Akbar's reign, India remained a *Dār al-Islām*, and yet he had to face decrees of Jihād and bloody insurrections.

Nevertheless, however, during early British rule, Maulawī Karāmat 'Alī of Jaunpur decreed that India was a *Dār al-Islām* and that, therefore, Jihād against the British was unlawful.[12]

Now, what is the status of India left truncated by the Britishers? The bulk of the 'Ulamā' are keeping mum on this issue. The Deoband school has, however, all along been maintaining that it is a *Dār al-Ḥarb*. The *fatwā* of Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, one of the great forerunners of the Deoband school, has already been quoted. Muḥammad Miyāṅ asserts that South Africa is a *Dār al-Ḥarb*: '*Dār al-Ḥarb* means a non-Muslim state, even if it be free from warfare, there be a peace treaty with the Muslims or an understanding regarding peace and tranquillity, or the law of the

10. Hunter, p. 123
11. *Loc. cit.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 124, and Appendix III.

land be such that the Muslims feel protected thereby. If it is not a Muslim state, it is not a *Dār al-Islām.*'[13] This definition /verdict fully applies to India of today. Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī, the greatest nationalist Muslim with Abu 'l-Kalām Āzād so called, was more candid. In a letter written during the British regime, he states his position thus: 'Hindustan is a *Dār al-Ḥarb.* It shall continue to be a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, as long as it is dominated by Kufr.'[14] In another letter written after Partition, he is equally candid: 'Hindustan has been a *Dār al-Ḥarb* ever since Islamic rule ended here.'[15] The recently published collection of the Deoband *fatwās*, *Fatāwā-i Deoband,* contains a *Fatwā* on the issue in hand, to the effect that even free India is a *Dār al-Ḥarb.*[16] The ground adduced is that, allegedly, Islam and the Muslims are denied their share of freedom; that the Muslims' life and property, honour and dignity, are not yet safe; and that the Muslim community remains miserable (*Millat-i Islāmiyyah sogwār hī hai*).'[17]

Sa'īd Aḥmad Akbarābādī maintains that there are not two but four domains: *Dār al-Islām, Dār al-Ḥarb, Dār al-Amān*, and *Dār al-'Aḥd,*[18] but asserts that this truncated India is none of these.[19] According to him, these distinctions are valid where the Muslims are one party and the non-Muslims another, but India that is Bharat is one nation, governed as one nation in accordance with a Constitution, which alone rather than the majority community has vouchsafed to the Muslims the rights they enjoy, on the basis of equality with the majority community. Hence, he concludes, that the foregoing classifications of domains are far from applicable to

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13. Muḥammad Miyāń, *Al-Jam 'iyyat* Daily, May 27,1966, p. 4, col. 1.
14. Husayn Aḥmad Madanī, *Maktūbāt-i Shaykh al-Islām*, Vol. II, letter No. 33.
15. *Ibid.*, letter No. 64.
16. *Fatāwā-i Deoband,* Vol. II (*Fatwā*-s of Muftī 'Azīz ar-Raḥmān 'Uthmānī), n.d.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
18. Akbarābādī, *op.cit.*, p. 75.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

our country. He appears to be inclined to viewing the classifications as outmoded. That is why he coins a new term, *al-waṭan al-qawmī* with its English equivalent 'national home', to define this country's status in terms of the *Sharī'ah.*[20]

It is true that it is the Constitution to which the Muslims owe their rights but it is truer that it is the majority to whom the Constitution owes its existence. Therefore, in the last analysis, our country is ruled by the will of the majority community and the Muslims' participation in government on the basis of equality with others is due to the benignity of the majority community. Declaring India as the national home of the Muslims does not appear to alter the issue.

As indicated earlier, the Muslims in a *Dār al Ḥarb* have only two alternatives:

1. To embark upon Jihād with a view to converting the *Dār al-Ḥarb* into a *Dār al-Islām.*

2. Failing which, to migrate to a safer territory. If, therefore, India is a *Dār al-Ḥarb*, the danger of an outbreak of Jihād is anybody's guess. And, if it is a *Dār al-Islām de jure,* the requirements of the *Sharī'ah* will not be met till it gets converted to a *Dār al-Islām de facto.* It is, indeed, up to the Muslim community in India to decide if it will maintain the distinction of *Dār al-Islām* and *Dār-al-Ḥarb* and hold fast to all that it implies or bid good-bye to this part of the *Sharī'ah.* Needless to say that the implications of their decision will be far-reaching. Akbarābādī's thesis does appear to tamper with the *Sharī'ah* but would feel powerless before the might of the doctrine of Jihād, as summed up at the very outset.

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20. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

CHAPTER III

THE MYTH OF UNITY AND EQUALITY OF RELIGIONS

In the opening chapter, we have essayed the task of exploding the myth that Indian culture is a composite culture, a cultural unity composed predominantly of pre-Muslim Indian culture and Muslim culture. The religious dimension of culture deserves separate treatment, which we proceed to be up to in the present chapter.

There are some to whom only their religion is true and some others to whom all religions are false or foolish. They do not concern us in this chapter. Our concern here is with the comparatively new-fangled notion that all religions are one, equal, or equally valid, which to us is a pleasant falsehood and thereby the biggest stumbling block in the understanding of religion and the religions. It is, in fact, at the back of many a mind inclined to believe in the theory of composite Indian culture.

The tone and temper of the three Semitic religions, viz. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is exclusivistic. Each of them asserts that only that is true and that all other religions, not excluding the remaining Semitic religions, are either false from the first or are perverted versions of the only true religion — 'outgrowths of error, sin, and malice', as Arnold Toynbee would have it. That is why Christianity and Islam are proselytizing religions. Amongst the Sūfī-s in Islam, however, there were some who appear to have some sympathy with the followers of other religions or their ways of worship. In the preceding chapter, we have seen how Rūmī comes out with a powerful plea for equal validity of all ways of worship in the eyes of God, in his story of Moses and the shepherd. Another Sūfī, Niẓām ad-Dīn Awliyā'

(1238-1325), once read the following verse to his disciples including Amīr Khusrau:

Har qawm rāst-rāhī dīnī wa qiblah-gāhī

Which means: Every (religious) community is on the right path, (indeed,) every religion, every way of worship. Yet he sometimes went against this dictum and observed, 'Kāfirs will ever remain in torment.'[1] Dārā Shukoh believed both Kufr and Islam to be the pathways to God. Kabīr, Nānak, Dādū, and other monist saints thought on the same line. In order to establish the truth of both Sūfism and Vedānta, and thereby Islam and Hinduism, as also to harmonize and synthetize them, Dārā Shukoh wrote a book entitled *Majma' al-Baḥrayn* in Persian and another entitled *Samudrasaṅgama* in Sanskrit. He held the Upaniṣads in the highest esteem, believed them to be divinely revealed, identified them as the 'hidden book' (*kitāb maknūn*) referred to in the Qur'ān[2] and described there as 'the mother of the book' (*umm al-kitāb*),[3] and rendered fifty of them into simple Persian for propagation of their message amongst the Muslims.[4]

As pointed out in the opening chapter, however, not all the Sūfī traditions belonged to this way of thought.

As regards Hinduism, it is well known for its inclusivistic and tolerant attitude towards other religions, cultures, and traditions, wherein, too, it discerns rays of truth and, underscoring and highlighting its own uniqueness, universality, and excellence, it does not forget to add, in unison with Rūmī, so to speak, that people following other ways of worship are also qualified to attain the *summum bonum.*

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1. *Fawā'id al-Fu'ād,* Shaykh Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyā's sayings, compiled by his direct disciple Amīr Ḥasan 'Alā Sanjarī alias Khawājah Ḥasan Dihlawī, Urdu tr. by Muslim Aḥmad Nizāmī under the title *Irshād-i Maḥbūb,* Delhi, n.d., p. 129.
2. Sūrah al-Wāqi 'ah (56) 78.
3. Āl 'Imrān (3) 7; Ibrāhīm (14) 39; az-Zukhruf (43) 4.
4. Dārā Shukoh, *Sirr-i Akbar,* Introduction.

It is true that some of the Hindu scriptures do not lag behind others in damning followers of different paths to hell and sometimes going to the extent of preaching violence against them. But Hinduism has outgrown it all. After all, Hinduism is truly a dialectical religion in the sense that it is perpetually in a state of flux thanks to the perennial conflict of contrary developments therein, with the result that it cannot remain tightly tied to any of its forms, any of its articulations, any of its tenets for long. In this consists its dynamism, all-inclusiveness, and spirit of tolerance. This is why, whereas other religions are condemned to swear by, bear responsibility for, and be bound down to each and every word uttered by their founders, Hinduism is ever ready to slough off or outgrow any of its ossified forms without compunction and assume newer forms, so that it becomes rather difficult to pinpoint what falls outside Hinduism or even to define Hinduism at a particular point of time. What Aḥmad Nadīm Qāsimī has to say to his beloved:

Jab bhī dekhā haī tujhe ṣūrat-ī nau dekhā haī
Marḥalah ṭayy na huā terī shināsāī kā

(Whenever I saw thee, I saw thee in a new form. The problem of thy identity remains unsolved).

Now, the modern tendency of regarding all religions as true begins with Rāmakṛṣṇa nicknamed Paramahaṁsa (1836-86), practically an uneducated saint. He maintains that the meaning of all religions are one and the same, whatever their complexion and contours, and that they are essentially one and lead to one and the same goal that is God. He declares that 'all religions pursuing different ways will finally reach the same God'. It is commonly claimed that he practised the spiritual disciplines prescribed by even Christianity and Islam and found them true. In her great works, *Isis Unveiled* and *Secret Doctrine*, H. P. Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, has undertaken the stupendous task of diving deep into the multiplicity of religio-

occultist traditions of the world and produced an impressive compound of the ideas discovered therein. Taking his cue from her, Bhagavan Das compiled a book entitled *Essential Unity of All Religions*. Gandhi's *sarvadharma-samabhāva* is another contribution to this way of thought. As will be evident in the sequel, he holds all religions not only true but equally true. Réné Guenon mooted the idea of the existence of a perennial religio-philosophic tradition of humanity which constitutes the corner-stone or rather matrix of the religions and cultures of the world. Following in his footprints, Frithjoff Schuon, a German philosopher of religion renamed 'Isā Nūr ad-Dīn on conversion to Islam, wrote a numbers of works including the one on 'transcendental unity' of religions. Zimmer, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Aldous Huxley, Mercia Eliade, and Seyyed Hossain Nasr are other important names belonging to this way of thought. They propound a *philosophia perennis* (*sanātana-dharma*) as the common ground and unifier of all religio-philosophic traditions.

In what follows regarding Rāmakṛṣṇa, we have thought it fit to use the information contained in the little, revealing book entitled *Ramakrishna Mission: In Search of a New Identity* by Ram Swarup profusely. Rāmakṛṣṇa told his devotees, on September 19, 1884, 'God made me pass through the disciplines of various paths. First according to the Purāṇa-s, then according to the Tantra. I also followed the disciplines of the Vedas.' We are at our wit's end in trying to make out what 'the disciplines of the Vedas' could mean, and that, too, to one far from learned in the Vedic lore, and how on earth it became possible for the practically unlettered saint to master the Purāṇa-s and Tantra-s so as to be able to practise the welter of disciplines prescribed in them, and that, too, in such a limited span of time. And what does he actually mean by 'disciplines' as prescribed in the Vedas, Purāṇa-s, and Tantra-s? If at all, they prescribe an unmanageable multiplicity of disciplines often of a mutually contradictory character, so much so

that one Purāṇa extols its own disciplines to the sky and condemns the others' as unmitigably sinful. Indeed, believe it or not, one and the same Purāṇa sometimes applauds one discipline or set of disciplines in one of its parts and condemns it outright in another. Any way, on April 12, 1885, the saint said, 'I practised all sorts of Sādhanā... During my Sādhanā period I had all kinds of amazing visions.' Then he describes his Sādhanā-s and visions. These Sādhanā-s clearly bear the Hindu stamp, presuppose the Hindu context. His devotees' claim is that he practised Christian and Islamic disciplines as well. But his own statement on the subject is conspicuous by its absence from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the earliest record of his words. It is said that a devotee, Swāmī Sāradānanda, met the saint in the last two years of the latter's life and wrote a work, *Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master*, running into 1050 pages 25 years after, in which the saint's Sādhanā-s of Islam and Christianity came to be described for the first time. From the book it appears that the saint spent three days each in the two disciplines. His practice of Islam covers only one page, reduced to ten lines by Swāmī Nikhilānanda in his shorter biography of the saint. This Swāmī says that the saint began his Sādhanā of Islam under the guidance of a Hindu named Govind Ray converted to Islam. 'After three days he saw a radiant figure, perhaps Muhammad. This figure gently approached him and finally lost himself in Sri Ramakrishna.' Ram Swarup comments, 'In Sāradānanda, the radiant figure remains nameless; in Nikhilānanda, the name becomes a guess; in subsequent Mission lore, it becomes a dead certainty.'[5] Eight years after, in November 1874, followed the practice of Christianity, in which not even this much was involved. The saint listened to some readings from the Bible and was moved. One day he saw a painting of the Madonna and the Child on a wall and fell into ecstasy. The ecstatic mood

5. Ram Swarup, *Ramakrishna Mission in Search of a New Identity*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 9, fn.

lasted for three days, at the end of which he saw a luminous figure, appearing, entering into, and merging with him. Sāradānanda calls it 'the Master's vision of Sri Ish'. Nikhilānanda says that 'the effect of this experience was stronger than that of the vision of Muhammad'.

What was the mode of the Islamic Sādhanā? Rāmakṛṣṇa 'repeated the *mantra* Allāh... and said Namāz thrice daily', dressing and eating like a Muslim. Then he felt a great urge to take beef. He entered a dog's body astrally and tasted the flesh of a dead cow floating in the Gaṅgā. It is completely forgotten, however, that in Islam flesh of a dead animal is a taboo (*ḥarām*). And again, Islam prescribes saying Namāz five times a day.

During the saint's practice of Islam and Christianity, the Hindu gods and goddesses disappeared from his mind. It is also contended that during the practice of Islam he got converted to Islam. If so, after the two or three days' Islamic discipline, the saint relinquished Islam and became an apostate (*murtadd*), and Islam penalizes apostasy (*irtidād*) with death. Islamically speaking, to embrace Islam temporarily and remain in Kufr permanently are one and the same, in effect.

Be it as it may. From the foregoing account, it transpires that the saint had the vision of Hindu gods and goddesses while practising Hinduism, of Jesus Christ while practising Christianity, of prophet Muḥammad while practising Islam. Then how has it been established that the goal of the three religions is one and the same? Each religion took him to a particular deity or prophet. Unity of the three religions would have been demonstrated if they had made him attain to one and the same deity/prophet or to the deities/prophets of all these religions.

Bhagavan Das's *Essential Unity of All Religions* is little better than a compilation of the goody-goody points from eleven religions, on the basis of which no such tall claim can be made as that all religions are essentially one. His work throws little light on the disputed points amongst the religions, not to speak of trying to

examine and synthetize them.

Gandhi, Vinoba, and their followers insist that all religions are equally true. Says Gandhi; 'The Hindu instinct tells me that all religions are more or less true. All proceed from the same God, but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality.'[6] He also says, 'I believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Zend Avesta to be as much divinely inspired as the Vedas.'[7] But 'even the *Vedas*, the *Quran* and the *Bible* are the imperfect word of God.'[8] He is a believer in 'the equality of all religions.'[9] His fundamental position is: 'Religion is one and it has several branches which are all equal.'[10] According to him, all religions are equal,[11] true,[12] and equally true.[13] Also: 'All prophets are equal'[5] and 'equally true'.[14]

Well, this doctrine does not appear to be well based. It finds no support from any religion whatever. We have referred to Rūmī's teaching accommodating all forms of worship. Even he takes those to task who hold all religions to be true, or false, for that matter:

Āṅ ki goyad jumlah ḥaqq ast aḥmaqī 'st
W' āṅ ki goyad jumlah baṭil āṅ shaqī 'st

(Whoever says all (religions) are true is an idiot, and whoever says all are false is a rogue). Jayanta Bhaṭṭa sardonically remarks that, if it be contended that all religions are valid, true, then, if I, too,

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6. *Young India*, 29, 5, 1924, p. 180.
7. *Ibid.*, 6.10.1921, p. 317.
8. *Harijan*, 16.2.1934.
9. *Ibid.*, 5.12.1936; 26.1.1947.
10. *Ibid.*, 16.1.1937.
11. *Ibid.*, 28.11.1936; 4.5.1947.
12. *Ibid.*, 6.4.1934; *Sābarmatī, 1928, p. 17.*
13. *Harijan*, 30.1.1937.
14. *Ibid.*, 13.3.1937.
15. *Loc. cit.*

found a religion today, it, too, would become valid, true, with the passage of time:

Sarvāgama-pramaṇātve nanvevam upapādite
Aham apyadya yaṁ kañcid āgamaṁ racayāmi cet,
Tasyāpi hi pramāṇatvaṁ dinaiḥ katipayair bhavet.[16]

The *Mahābhārata* contains a remarkable couplet in this connexion, to the effect that the fundamental moral principles in general may be shared by all religions in common and even equally but their philosophical positions are often different:[17]

Tulyaṁ śaucaṁ tapoyuktaṁ, dayā bhūteṣu cānagha!
Vratānāṁ dhāraṇaṁ tulyaṁ, darśanaṁ na samaṁ tayoḥ.

In his *Bṛhaṭṭīkā*, Kumārila invites our attention to the innate differences amongst the different religious traditions and argues against the idea of their equal validity:

Tīrthakṛt-samayānāṁ ca paraspara-virodhataḥ
Sarveṣāṁ āptatā nāsti, kaścid eva bhaved guruḥ.

Yāmuna claims that the Tantra schools are intended to be different and that, therefore, they must not be confused to be one and the same:[18]

Śaivaṁ, Pāśupataṁ, Saumyaṁ, Lāguḍaṁ ca caturvidham
Tantra-bhedaḥ samuddiṣṭaḥ, saṅkaraṁ na samācaret.

The Qur'ān claims and proclaims that religion is only one, which was revealed by God to man through different prophets and in different forms to different peoples in different times and climes. God has sent His prophets to every nation and every age to

16. Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, *op. cit.*, p. 248.
17. *Mahābhārata*, Sānti-Parvan 300.9.
18. Yāmuna, *op. cit.*, 109.

proclaim the one religion[19] (*ad-dīn*)[20] called Islam[21] or Ḥanifiyyah.[22] He gave to Muḥammad the same religion to propagate, as He had given to his predecessors like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.[23] Mawlānā Abu 'l-Kalām Āzād was a well known protagonist of the unity of religion (*waḥdatu'd-dīn*).

But from a close scrutiny of the revelation it transpires that the author of the Qur'ān has the Semitic races in mind. It clearly indicates that God has revealed His books or rather book to only two nations — Jews and Christians.[24] It also informs us that prophethood and the Book (of revelation), together with kingship, are the hallmark of the clan of Israel,[25] viz. the line of the twelve sons of prophet Ya'qūb (Jacob) considered collectively, who became the progenitors of the twelve families of the Jews. Incidentally, a problem arises here. Muḥamamad belonged to the clan of Ishmael, and not to that of Israel. How then did he come to be anointed with prophethood? We cannot afford to go into this question in this work.

Thus, it is evident that the Qur'ān can lay claim to the unity of the Semitic religions only, rather than of the other religions as well. To be sure, in the eyes of the Qur'ān, idolatrous polytheism is irreligion, pure and simple, rather than religion fundamentally one with the Semitic religions.

There are some who find in the Qur'ān glimpses of equal respect for all religions, indeed for polytheism and idolatry as well. One of its verses relied upon by them runs thus: 'Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion' (*La-kum dīnu-kum wa li-*

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19. Ar-Rā'd (13) 7; Yūnus (10) 47; al-Fāṭir/al-Malā'ikah (35) 24.

20. Āl-'Imrān (3) 19; ar-Rūm (30) 30; ash-Shura (42) 13.

21. Āl-'Imrān (3) 19.

22. Al-Baqarah (2) 135; Āl 'Imrān (3) 67, 95, 135; an-Nisā' (4) 125; al-An'ām (6) 162; Yūnus (10) 105; an-Naḥl (16) 123; ar-Rūm (30) 30.

23. Ash-Shūrā (42) 13.

24. Al-An'ām (6) 157.

25. Al-Baqarah (2) 47; al-Mā'idah (5) 20; al-Jāthiyah (45) 16.

'ya dīn).[26] But this verse teaches nothing like respectability of all religions. The full chapter containing the verse is reproduced below for a proper appreciation of the import of the verse:

'Say: O kāfirs (*Qul: Yā ayyuha 'l-kāfirūna*)!

'I worship not that which ye worship (*Lā a'budū mā u'budtana*).

'Nor worship ye that which I worship (*Wa lā antum 'ābidūna mā a'budū*).

'And I shall not worship that which ye worship (*Wa lā anā 'ābidum mā 'abattum*).

'Nor will ye worship that which I worship (*Wa lā antum 'ābidūna mā ā'budū*).

'Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion (*La-kum dīnu-kum wa li-'ya dīn*).[27]

According to Jalāl ad-Dīn Suyūṭi, the verse in question stands abrogated by the verse of Jihād.[28] Mullā Ḥusayn Wa'iẓ Kāshifī in his Persian commentary entitled *Tafsīr-i Ḥusaynī* on the Qur'ān and several other classical (Arabic and Persian) commentators of the Qur'ān follow suit. Ibn Kathīr, one of the leading classical commentators in Arabic, has a different story to tell. According to him, this chapter of the Qur'ān is intended to proclaim and throw into relief the Prophet's disclaimer of or aversion (*barā'ah*) to Kufr. Abu 'l-'Alā Mawdūdī, the leading commentator in Urdu, discusses the chapter at length and comes to a similar conclusion. He makes it abundantly clear that it rules out for good the

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26. Al-Kāfirūn (109) 6

27. *Ibid.*, 1-6.

28. See Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Al-Ittiqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, Vol.II, Urdu tr. by Muḥammad Ḥalīm Anṣārī Daulawī, Firozpur, 1908, Faṣl (Section) 47, pp. 61-62.

possibility of cooperation, compromise, or co-existence of Islam with Kufr. In other words, Islam is Islam and Kufr is Kufr, and never the twain can meet. Mawdūdī adds that its teaching is a far cry from religious tolerance, as it is erroneously made out to be. Another modern commentator Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī also interprets the chapter under consideration as throwing into relief Islam's aversion (*tabarrā*) to and exclusion (*mufāraqat*) from Kufr. A third modern commentator, 'Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī, remarks that it is preposterous to interpret the Qur'ānic verse in question to teach religious tolerance and forbearance. According to him the position is just the reverse. The verse proclaims failure and fruitlessness of religious syncretism of all kinds, such as the one once founded by Akbar. His words are memorable: '*Ba'z logoṅ ne 'ajab "khush-fahmī" se kām lekar is āyat ko Islām kī "rawādārī" aur "ma-rañjān ma-rañj" policy ke thūbūt meṅ pesh kiyā hai, ki Islām ne har madhhab wāle ko apnī jagah qā'im aur bāqī rahne kī ijāzat dī hai. Hālaṅ-ki wāqi'ah is se bar-'aks hai. Yah āyat to Akbar (farmāṅ-rawā-i Hind) ke nikāle hūe makhlūṭi dīn aur isī qabil kī sāri koshishoṅ kī lā-ḥāṣilī aur nā-kāmī kā i'lan kar rahī hai.*' ('Out of strange "good sense", certain persons have presented this verse in proof of Islam's policy of "tolerance" and of "neither inflict pain nor suffer pain", (which is) that Islam permits the followers of every religion to stand firm and remain in their own place. But the position is just opposite. This is a verse which is proclaiming the fruitlessness and failure of the syncretic religion invented by Akbar (the emperor of Hind) and of all attempts of this type.')

Another oft-quoted verse in this connexion is, 'There is no compulsion in religion' (*Lā ikrāha fi'd-Dīn*).[29] From it, too, the unwary or the unscrupulous are wont to hear a declaration of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence of Islam with other religions. But many classical commentators claim it to have been

29. Al-Baqarah (2) 256.

abrogated by the Jihādic verse. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn al- 'Arabī (b. 1076 A.D.), a great classical commentator in Arabic, represents them all when he observes: 'Wherever in the Qur'ān there are directions to forget, forbear, forgive, and avoid the Kāfirs, all such directions stand abrogated by the verse of the sword (*āyat as-sayf*), which is, "Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters whenever ye find them, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But, if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allāh is forgiving, merciful."[30] This verse has served to abrogate one hundred twenty-four verses.[31] Same is the case with another verse: '... Wouldst thou (O Muḥammad!) compel men until they become believers?'[32]

The full verse containing the words '*Lā ikrāha fi 'd-Dīn*' runs thus: 'There is no compulsion in religion. The right has henceforth become manifest as distinct from the wrong. So, he who rejecteth false gods and believeth in Allāh hath grasped the most trustworthy Hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah is hearer, knower.' Shāh Walī Allāh interprets it in such a way, however, that it ceases to rule out the use of force in propagation of Islam and, instead, provides a basis for just the use of such force. He writes: 'There is no compulsion for the sake of religion, that is the doctrine of Islam has been demonstrated. Hence it is not tantamount to compulsion, as it were, though compulsion it is, on the whole. (*Nīst jabr kaand barā'i din. Ya''mi ḥujjat-i Islām ẓāhir shud. Pas gūyā jabr kardan nīst, agarche fi 'l-jumlah jabr bāshad*).[33]

Before closing this section of the present chapter, we would do well to examine one more verse of the Qur'ān, which reads

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30. At-Tawbah (9) 5.

31. As-Suyūṭī, *loc. cit.* Particularly about the abrogation of '*Lā ikrāha fi 'd-dīn*', see his *Ad-Durr al-Manthūr*, Maymanah (Egypt), 1314 A.H., Vol. I, p. 330.

32. Yūnus (10) 99.

33. Shāh Walī Allāh, *Tafsīr-i Fatḥ ar-Raḥmān*, 2-256.

thus: 'Lo! those who believe (in Islam), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabeans — whoever believeth in Allāh and the Last Day and does right — surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.'[34] This verse refers to four religions: Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Sabeanism. Their followers will be rewarded by God, if they believe in Him and the Day of Judgment. Idolatrous polytheism is conspicuous by its absence from the list of the religions, along with Zoroastrianism, though the Qur'ān refers to both elsewhere. Indeed, it knows the following half a dozen religions: 1. Islam, 2. Judaism, 3. Sabeanism, 4. Christianity, 5. Zoroastrianism, and 6. Idolatrous polytheism (*shirk*).[35] Many commentators adjudge the previous verse abrogated, and there is good ground for the view. In a later verse the Qur'ān itself rules, 'And whosever seeketh as religion other than Islam it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the Hereafter.'[36]

The Qur'ān appears to regard Judaism and Christianity as earlier forms of Islam which have undergone distortion and perversion through history.[37] It condemns idolatrous polytheism as irreligion pure and simple, without any revelational foundation, masquerading as religion. The mission of Islam is to abolish it altogether, reinstate Judaism and Christianity in their pristine purity that is Islam itself, and establish Islam throughout the length and breadth of the world. Though certain verses of the Qur'ān are construed to criticise Zoroastrianism,[38] the Qur'ān actually leaves its status undefined. As regards Sabeanism, the Qur'ān contains no adverse remarks, but it leaves its status, too, undefined. In fact, these two religions posed no problem to the Prophet. His first

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34. Al-Baqarah (2) 62. It is almost identical with al-Mā'idah (5) 69.

35. Al-Ḥajj (22) 17.

36. Al 'Imrān (3) 85.

37. For example, see al-Ḥadīd (57) 27.

38. Al-Ḥajj (22) 17. Zoroastrianism appears to be referred to indirectly in al-An'ām (6) 1.

acquaintance with Zoroastrianism was through Salmān Fārsī, his favourite who had renounced Zoroastrianism and converted to Islam. It was only in Baḥrīn, however, that the Prophet met with the community of Zoroastrians, whom he categorized as near-scripturaries and on whom, accordingly, he levied Jizyah. And, if there did exist any Sabeans in Ḥijāz during his time, they might have existed only exceptionally.

The Qur'ān is also acquainted with a variety of atheism, an irreligion, according to which there is no other world and time (*dahr*) is the destroyer of all.[39]

Now, when the Jews and the Christians did not respond favourably to the Prophet's call, the Qur'ān declared them Kāfirs,[40] along with the idolatrous polytheists. Where is the unity or equality of religions, in the Qur'ān?

Well, what do we actually mean by the unity and equality of all religions? The following alternatives suggest themselves in this behalf:

1. Uniformity, formal identity
2. Commonness of core
3. Essential unity, commonness of essence
4. Cognation /cognateness, or common origin
5. Organismic unity
6. Unity of objects of worship /devotion
7. Unity of spirit and of purpose
8. Unity of means, of approach

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39. Al-Jāthiyah (45) 24.
40. Al-Baqarah (2) 41, for example.

9. Equal validity of differences in perspective and in spiritual competence diversifying essential unity.

When we talk of unity or equality of religions, which meaning do we have in mind?

The first alternative, that of uniformity or formal identity, is patently false. It is belied by experience, which testifies to multiformity or formal diversity of religions.

The second alternative, that of commonness of the core of religions, too, does not hold water. The core of the Semitic religions may be said to be common more or less. In fact, we can attempt even a grouping of religions on the basis of commonness or near-commonness of their core. Yet to claim all religions to be having a common core would be a travesty of truth.

As regards the third alternative, what is to be understood by essence? As we have seen, the gulf dividing Hinduism and Islam is too yawning to be bridgeable. The centre of gravity of Hinduism is, on one hand, the realizable or in the ultimate analysis rather eternally self-realized Ātman, the Self, as against a wholly other, rather whimsical, jealous, extracosmic personal God of Islam; on another, self-realization, self-enlightenment, as against correct belief and unquestioning obedience to the letter of the law in Islam; on a third, due regard for varying levels of spiritual competence (*adhikāra-bheda*) as against anti-polytheistic, iconoclastic monotheism of Islam, despite Rūmī's readiness to accommodate diverse conceptions of God and forms of worship determined by the diversity of levels of religious insight and Jāmī's recognition of gradations of spiritual experience (*ḥifẓ-i marātib*), which the two Sūfī savants stood for in spite of Islam's uncompromising stance to the contrary; and, on a fourth, *Dharma* — the variously manifesting individual, social, as well as cosmic Norm —, historical instantiations of which are subject to change with the changing time-place-circumstance (*deśa-kāla-nimitta*), as against *Dīn*, as in Islam, fixed for all time

to come.

Indeed, Hinduism is an open religion, an evolutionary religion, a pluralistic religion, an alternationistic religion, and what-not. Above all, it is discreditable as a dialectical religion in both the fundamental senses of the term 'dialectical':

1. It is a process.
2. Its growth often takes place through conflict and contradiction in the realm of ideas and approaches.

It is strange, however, incidentally, that many people wedded to dialectics and swearing by it in season and out of season in interpreting socio-cultural phenomena, are found to behave as enemies number one of Hinduism. They are rather embarrassed and exasperated by the dialectical character of this great, multidimensional religion, for they fail to find in it a stationary point to strike at!

Islam is an Allāh-, Muḥammad-, and Qur'ān-intoxicated religion, so to speak, with a non-negotiable belief in angels, heaven and hell, Day of Judgment, Allāh seated on the Empyrean on the seventh heaven, wherefrom flowed His words to the Prophet through an angel named Gabriel in the form of the Qur'ān. Such an account no amount of rationalization can hope to reduce to the status of merely a figurative description. Islam is a religion iconoclastic to the core, closing the doors of Divine grace upon the Kāfirs and virtually outlawing all those of them who do not surrender abjectly barely to subsist as *dhimmī*-s, with few fundamental rights.

The Buddha's teachings, as also Hinduism's generally, are marked by the absence of any such emphasis on monotheism, unitary divine revelation, etc. Islam knows neither reincarnation (*saṁsāra*) nor its cessation (*nirvāṇa/mokṣa*) characteristic of Buddhism and Hinduism. Hinduism's insistence on eternality of the Self and the Buddhists' on the denial of the self are well

known, though the bulk of the latter involve themselves in a contradictory situation by postulating Nibbāna/Nirvāṇa in eternalistic parlance. Christianity cannot admit to its heaven anyone bereft of an absolute faith in Jesus, whereas Islam subordinates the faith in Jesus to faith in Muḥammad; in that faith in not only Jesus but also in all other prophets is a necessary condition for admission to the Islamic *Jannah*, but the sufficient condition thereof is provided by a crowning faith in Muḥammad.

Schleiemacher says, 'The deeper one progresses in religion, the more the whole religious world appears as an indivisible whole.'[41] And Max Muller, 'There is only one eternal and universal religion standing above, beneath, and beyond all religions to which they all belong or can belong.'[42] It is also asserted that there are seven principal areas of unity of the high religions, which are:[43]

1. The reality of the transcendent, the holy, the divine, the Other.
2. This reality is immanent in human hearts.
3. It is for man the *summum bonum*, the highest truth, righteousness, goodness, beauty, and indeed extending beyond these.
4. It is ultimate love which reveals itself to men in men.
5. The way to It is the way of sacrifice.
6. The way to the neighbour side by side with the way to the divine.
7. Love as the superior most way to the divine.

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41. See Friedrich Heiler, 'The History of Religions as a Preparation for the Co-operation of Religions', *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, 2nd impression, University of Chicago, 1962, p. 141.

42. *Loc. cit.*

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-151.

These characteristics hold good by and large for mystical religions like Vedāntic-Tantric Hinduism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Christian and Muslim mysticisms, broadly speaking. For that matter, these mystical religions display two more, kindred areas of unity, which are numbered eighth and ninth below:

8. The ideal of what the *Gītā* calls '*triguṇātīta*',[44] namely the stage beyond good and evil, virtue and sin, righteousness and unrighteousness, *dharma* and *adharma*,[45] — an offshoot, of course, of the third point and yet deserving separate enunciation.

9. The metaphysics of silence, viz. acknowledgement in all humility of the ineffable character of the said reality.

But what about the prophetic religions? Items 2, 4, and 6 to 9 cannot be said unreservedly to apply to them, short, of course, of their mystical accretions or rather superadditions.

To say, therefore, that all religions are essentially one or equal is a gross overstatement, unsubstantiated or unsupported by the nature and history of the various lines of religious development of humanity.

Now comes the fourth alternative. The question is, Do all religions owe their origin to a common source, or are they cognate ones? It must be granted that down the ages there has been a lot of impact of one religion upon another and vice versa by way of mutual borrowings and exchange of ideals, rituals. It is also beyond doubt that certain high religions have had a common origin. It needs no emphasis that the Semitic religions represent a common line of origin and development.[46] Even the Qur'ān bears

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44. *Bhagavad-Gītā* 18.17.

45. *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* 1.2.14; *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* 3.1.3; *Gītā* 18.66.

46. Gaṅgā Prasād, *Fountain Head of Religion*, 6th ed., Ajmer, 1957, Chapters I, II, IV.

testimony to it.[47] Judaism appears to have had a Zoroastrian source to an enormous extent. Such of the former's fundamentals as God and some of His names, eternal struggle between God and the Satan, angels with their names and offices, cosmogony, the Resurrection, future life, heaven and hell, are undoubtedly traceable to Zoroastrianism.[48] And it is admitted on all hands that the Zoroastrian religion owes much to the ancient Vedic lore or, in the alternative, that the Zoroastrian and the Vedic religions have a common source. Thus, all these religions are cognate ones to some extent or ther. All the same, this does not appear to be true of the bulk of the tribal religions, which must be regarded by and large as wild growths rather than as owing their existence to some common matrix. Besides, most of the cognate religions took such different and even opposite lines of development that their cognateness has become meaningless today.

But those whom we have referred to earlier as upholding the great Tradition of Philosophia Perennis understand the cognateness of the religions differently. They usually fight shy of recognizing the theory of evolution as applied in the field of religion. They seem to maintain that all the religions are different manifestations or representations of the common tradition of humanity and that, therefore, there is a kind of transcendental unity among them. Maybe, though there is no tangible evidence to go upon, humanity was fortunate enough in the beginning to acquire from some now unknown source a fund of religious knowledge, which peeps through different religious traditions even today. Even so, however, these traditions stand so radically apart today that it is preposterous to try and hunt up any significant strain of unity among them.

Now, let us take the fifth meaning. Are the different religions different organs of one and the same organism? Their cognateness does provide an atmosphere favourable to such a conclusion. Yet

47. See, for example, as-Shūrā (42) 13.

48. Ganga Prasad, *op. cit.*, Ch. IV.

the organismic view of religion ceases to be significant today no less than the cognateness view, and for the same reason.

Now about the sixth meaning. Do all religions enjoin devotion to or worship of a common deity? The Buddha does on occasion prescribe worship of gods and goddesses as also of his own relics,[49] yet it is of a secondary moment. Jainism knows no creator of the cosmos. It can, therefore, and does prescribe worship of only human beings, viz. Tīrthaṅkara-s, who are liberated human beings, Yahwe/Jehova, Allāh, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī, and suchlike look like one and the same, or similar deities, yet they can be said to belong to different stages of spiritual development. A Sūtra of Patañjali reads thus:[50] '*Sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅgas-mayākaraṇaṁ, punar aniṣṭa-prasaṅgāt.*' That if a deity proper to a particular stage of trance tempts the wayfarer, the latter must not succumb to the temptation, otherwise he will again fall into trouble. According to the *Vyāsabhāṣya* thereon, the gods belonging to what is called the *Madhumatī-bhūmi* are wont to involve the wayfarer in various temptations. The illustrations of the temptations given therein remind one of the pleasures of the paradise, *Jannah*, or *Svarga*.

Hinduism provides choice of a deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*) suited to one's own taste, temperament, or spiritual competence, signified by the term *adhikāra-bheda*. The *Gītā* says that the choice of one's deity is determined by one's own native temperament.[51]

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49. *Dīgha-Nikāya*, Vagga II, Sutta 3, pp. 71, 110, for example.

50. *Yoga-Sūtra*, Vibhūti-Pāda, 51.

51. कामैस्तैस्तैर्हृतज्ञानाः प्रपद्यन्तेऽन्यदेवताः।
तं तं नियममास्थाय प्रकृत्या नियताः स्वया॥
यो यो यां यां तनुर्भक्तः श्रद्धयाऽर्चितुमिच्छति।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम्॥
यान्ति देवव्रता देवान्, पितॄन् यान्ति पितृव्रता।
भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या, यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम्॥
सत्त्वानुरूपा सर्वस्य श्रद्धा भवति भारत।
श्रद्धामयोऽयं पुरुषो, यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः॥

It would be pertinent to point out in this connexion that some Tibetan Lamas are said to claim that thought can create a tangible object, a thought-form, which they call *tulpa*. It is also claimed that human beings can project mental or semi-physical phantasms. A thought-form can sometimes be seen by others, have a temporary life of its own, and even break free from control and wander off.[52] It can be evoked even inadvertently.[53] Indeed it is also claimed to be possible to create in that manner even 'hills, enclosures, houses, forests, roads, bridges'.[54] Then, are the variously worshipped deities not mental projections or mental offspring of the worshippers or rather of those who claim to have envisioned them? It is significant that Kumārila fights shy of giving credence to Yogic intuition as a case of valid knowledge on its own. He argues that, if an empirical flash of intuition unsupported/unverified by perception, inference, etc. is not accorded the status of valid knowledge, the Yogic intuition fares no better:[55]

Laukikī pratibhā yadvat pratyakṣādyanapekṣiṇī
Na niścayāya paryāptā, tathā syād yogināmapi

According to Pārthasārathi Miśra, another Pūrva-Mīmāṁsā philosopher, Yogic intuition is caused by brooding (*bhāvanā*)[56] and semblance of reason etc. (*lingādyābhāsa*),[57] for which reason he assigns no probative value to it. Sādhu Śāntinātha, a modern yogin who is no more, practised Yoga for over four decades and came to the

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यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान्, यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः
प्रेतान् भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः॥
Gītā 7.20-21; 9.25; 17.3-4.

52. Geoffrey Ashe, *The Ancient Wisdom, London*, 1971, p. 195.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
54. *Loc. cit.*
55. *Mīmāṁsāślokvārtika* 1.1.4, Pratyakṣa-Sūtra, 32.
56. *Śāstradīpikā*, Chowkhamba, p. 52.
57. *Loc. cit.*

conclusion that what the Yogin envisions is not reality as such but just a creature of his own imagination intensified by constant brooding.,[58] It appears that this point does have some bearing upon the issue of projection of thought-forms by a section of the Lāmās. We are not competent, however, to pronounce upon it.

Well, the *Gītā* presents another side of the picture, which appears to lend support to the view that religions have more or less a common deity to worship, willy-nilly. It says that even those who think they worship deities other than God actually worship God Himself, though not in an appropriate manner:[59]

Ye'pyanyadevatābhaktāḥ yajante śraddhayānvitāḥ
Te'pi māmeva Kaunteya! yajantyavidhipūrvakam

(Even those who devote themselves to other gods and sacrifice to them filled with faith, do really worship Me though not according to rule).

The *Gītā* also claims that at bottom all are oriented towards God and that in whatever way people approach God in their devotion in that same way does He respond to them:[60]

Ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁstathaiva bhajāmyaham
Mam vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ Pārtha! sarvaśaḥ

(In whatever way devotees approach me in that same way do I return their love. O Arjuna! they tread my own path after all and by all means).

On this plane, the belief in the unity of objects of worship/ devotion acquires significance. Since, however, the worshipper's/ devotee's tendency in this direction is in the darkness of

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58. Sādhu Sāntinātha, *The Critical Examination of the Philosophy of Religion*, Amalner, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 1-12; *Prācyadarśanasamīkṣā*, Poona, 1940, pp. *ka-ḍa* (i.e. Prastāvanā); *Experiences of a Truth-Seeker, Vol.I*, Part 1, Gorakhpur, n.d., concluding chapter.

59. Gītā 9.23.

60. *Ibid.*, 4,11.

ignorance, the unity and equality of religions in this sense has little practical value. On the theoretical plane, too, it is like the proposition that, since all is Brahman, human beings, animals, and inanimate objects are all one and the same.

Let us now turn to the seventh meaning of the unity and equality of religions, which is, unity of spirit and of purpose. There is hardly any difficulty in maintaining that the broad purpose of all religions is one and the same, which is, attainment of the *summum bonum*. A verse in the *Mahābhārata* runs thus:[61]

Āśramāṇāṁ ca sarveśāṁ niṣṭhāyām aikyamucyate

(Unity of the Āśrama-s/stages of life consists in the unity of purpose).

For our purpose, we can rewrite it like this:

Sarveṣāṁ sampradāyānāṁ niṣṭhāyām aikyamucyate

That is, the unity of the religions consists in the unity of their spirit of devotion. Indeed, the *Sūtasaṁhitā*, believed to belong to the *Skanda-Purāṇa*, designates as 'dharma' and thereby accepts as authentic even such a religion as is born out of the generative insight of its founder independently of the Vedas, in a spirit of devotion:[62]

Svamanīṣikayotpanno nirmūlo dharmasañjñitaḥ
Śraddhayā sahito yastū so'pi dharmaudāhṛtaḥ

(If something called 'dharma' is not well rooted / not rooted in the Vedas and is purely a creature of one's own thought, but is backed by faith, that is also dharma).

Once the text goes to the extent of adjudging as the good whatever is inspired by devotion or faith:[63]

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61. *Mahābhārata*, Sānti-Parvan 270.36.
62. *Sūtasaṁhitā* 4.20.13.
63. *Ibid.*, 4.3.23.

Śraddhayā sahitaṁ sarvaṁ śreyase bhūyase bhavet

(Whatever is inspired by faith has the capacity of leading to the *summum bonum*).

The same spirit appears to be breathed by the following lines of Iqbāl:

Agar hai 'ishq to hai Kufr bhī Musalmānī
Na ho to mard-i Musalmāṅ bhī Kāfir-o Zindīq

Mirzā Ghālib is more straightforward and poetic in his following lines.

Wafādārī ba-shart-i ustawārī aṣl-i imāṅ hai
Mare butkhāne meṅ to Ka'be meṅ gāḍo Barahman ko
Nahīṅ kuchh subḥah wo zunnār ke phande meṅ gīrā'ī
Wafādārī meṅ Shaykh-o Barhaman kī āzmā'ish hai

According to Iqbāl, the test of true religion, Islam, is true devotion: a devoted Kāfir is as good as a Muslim and a devotionless Muslim is as bad as a Kāfir. According to Ghālib, the essence of religion is steadfast fidelity/faithfulness, so that a Brāhmaṇa steadfast in fidelity to his idols deserves the honour of being buried in Ka'bah like a true Muslim. The rosary and the sacred thread are powerless to grasp the true meaning of religion. The Shaykh (Muslim divine) and the Brāhmaṇa have to stand the test of fidelity/faithfulness for their claims of religiousness. To crown all, Shiblī Nu'mānī sings:

Do dil būdan dar īṅ rah sakht-tar 'ayb ast sālik rā
Khajil az Kufr-i khud hastam ki dārad bū-i īmāṅ ham

(Having divided loyalty is the greatest drawback in a wayfarer. I am ashamed of my Kufr, for it has the smell of Islam as well).

The upshot of these utterances is that a sincere faith does have the capacity of saving one, even if it is in something not considered worthwhile by others. In fact, true, steadfast, and

lasting faith is always oriented or directed towards what one finds to be true. Hence, if and when one comes to discover that what one takes to be true is at bottom false, one's faith is bound to change its orientation or direction accordingly. Such real faith must be distinguished from the dogmatic, blind faith of the masses having little serious concern for higher verities. A highly meaningful Vedic couplet is:[64]

Dṛṣṭvā rūpe vyākarot satyānṛte Prajāpatiḥ
Aśraddhāṁ anṛte 'dadhāc chraddhāṁ satye Prajāpatiḥ

That is, God has established a distinction between truth and falsity, locating belief in truth and disbelief in falsity. That is to say, human mind is naturally bent towards truth and has a native aversion towards falsity.

In spite of everything, however, the professed, declared goals of the religions sometimes seem to be irreconcilable. The *summum bonum* of the bulk of the religions, high or low, is attainment of heaven; of Hinduism in its higher reaches something higher, called Mokṣa; of the Bhakti cult of Hinduism something transcending Mokṣa as well, called Bhakti itself; of early Buddhism Nibbāna/Nirvāṇa interpreted in divergent and sometimes mutually opposite ways; of the Bodhisattva-yāna of Mahāyāna Buddhism universal Nirvāṇa, Nirvāṇa of the whole world.

As regards the eighth meaning of unity and equality of religions, viz. unity of means or unity of approach, it has no supporters. The means envisaged by the religions for attainment of the *summum bonum* — the eightfold path in Buddhism, Self-realization in Hinduism in general, Bhakti in Vaiṣṇavism, faith in the Christ in Christianity, faith in Muḥammad and fasting etc. in Islam, and so on — are patently different and rule out the question of their unity entirely.

The ninth and last meaning of the unity or equality of religions

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64. *Yajur-Veda* 19.77.

is equal validity of differences in perspective and in spiritual competence. A couplet of Rūmī is:

Az naẓargāh ast aiy maghz-ī wujūd!
Ikhtilāf-ī Momin-o Gabr-o Juhūd

That is, the difference of Muslim, Zoroastrian, and Jew consists in the difference of perspective. We have already discussed the Hindu theory of *adhikāra*, which helps explain much of the differences amongst certain religious traditions. Yet it is far from helpful in explaining away the difference amongst, say, the Semitic religions on one hand and the non-Semitic on the other. It can explain the differences in the conception of the deity and devotion to a considerable extent, but it can have no bearing upon the conflicting tenets of the religions. Of course, no stretch of imagination backed by the theories of perspective and *adhikāra*, or by any theory for that matter, can hope to reconcile anti-polytheistic monotheism and trans-polytheistic monotheism, iconoclasm and idol-worship, Jihād and the *adhikāra* doctrine itself.

Only one, general point remains now to be considered. What does the term 'dharma'/'religion' denote in the expression 'unity and equality of all *dharma*-s/religions'? Whatever is named 'dharma'/religion'? Or is there any line of distinction between religion so called and religion as such? Gandhi says that all religions are true and equally true. Are consideration for other religions (envisaged in the *Gītā*) and aversion for other religions (displayed in the *Qur'ān*) equally true? The *Mahābhārata* says:[65]

Dharmamṁ yo bādhate dharmo na sa dharmaḥ kudharma tat
Avirodhāt tu yo dharmaḥ sa dharmaḥ satyavikrama!

That is , if a religion hinders/oppresses another religion, it is not religion but irreligion. Is such a religion also true? Then Jayanta

65. *Mahābhārata*, Vana-Parvan 130.11. 'Kudharma' is un-Pāṇinian.

Bhaṭṭa's sarcasm will hold good, that, if all that passes for religion is true, a 'religion' arbitrarily conceived by him will also become true in course of time!

From the foregoing discussions, it is evident that unity, equality, or equal validity of all religions is nothing better than a myth. Every religion has two dimensions, generic and specific. In its generic dimension, it shares certain characteristics in common with other religions, while, in its specific dimension, it has characteristics proper to itself, which distinguish it from other religions. To the first dimension belong ethical teachings in general; to the second, metaphysical and ritualistic doctrines in general, which serve often to set one religion against another. Even ethical teachings sometimes turn into specific teachings. 'Thou shalt not kill' is a generic ethical teaching, shared by the religions. But, if some religion qualifies it so as to restrict its application to its own followers, the general teaching will turn into a special teaching, a teaching proper to the particular religion. For example, again, certain religions teach universal brotherhood, whereas Islam restricts the feeling of brotherhood to its own followers.[66] Likewise, modern conscience will revolt against the very thought of enslavement, while the Qur'ān recognizes slavery and has a place for it in its social system. Thus, even general ethical principles are set at nought by certain religions.

The truth of the matter is that unity and disunity, equality and inequality, and validity and invalidity are multi-level phenomena. Hence, instead of passing sweeping remarks on religions *vis-a-vis* unity etc., we had better try and determine their levels of unity etc.

Besides, multiplicity of religions does not always involve the question of their validity or otherwise. It is more often than not as innocent as the multiplicity of flowers, which are there to cater for a multiplicity of tastes and temperaments. (Any thorns in the midst of flowers must be taken care of, to be sure.)

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66. *'Innama 'l-mu' minūna ikhwatun'*, al-Ḥujurāt (49) 10.

The great Urdu poet Zauq's couplet is:

Gul-hā-i rañgā-rañg se hai rawnaq-ī chaman
Aiy Zauq! is jahāñ ko hai zeb ikhtilāf se

That is, even as the splendour of the garden consists in flowers of various colours, the beauty of this world consists in difference of ideas. Indeed, every religion has its personality, which serves to distinguish and differentiate it from other religions and thereby to give it its own identity. That has to be identified.